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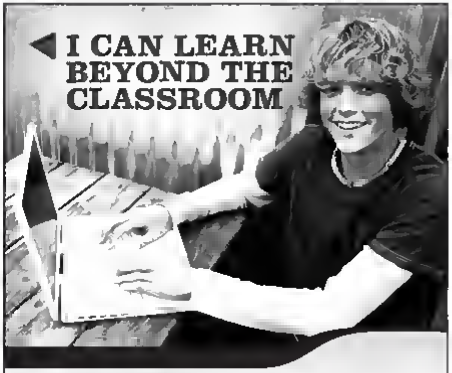
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On the Cover *Dancers at Eagles Hall in Alameda. Photo by Chris Duffey*

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LETTERS

Re: [illegible] 3

They're All Extremists

I loved the article by Dan Lattin about the two with it Berkeley Muslims offering a more inclusive path than that offered by "some Shafite extremists." In Islam you are either a believer or not. If not ...garments of fire have been prepared for the unbelievers ... those who deny our revelations burn in fire."

I'm enclosing some anti Koran writings. I'm more inclined to give the enclosed writings credence than that of some convert apologist. Islam is insane. I submit that Hamza Yusif and Zaid Shakir keep their mouths shut when they are around real "some Shafite extremists" but around most Moselm Imams. What's the use. Change your name, dress funny, oppress woman get into the religious swing. It's okay because other religions do it, too. Do these guys also believe that when their prophet died, he got on a horse and ascended into heaven?

Why should anyone believe what these guys say? Just look at what Islam does.

Bill Hoch, Oakland

Re: was 6/17

Carano vs. Santos

Yikes! Your interesting piece on the local female mixed martial arts scene wonders if there will "be a place for these fighters to compete." You must not have known that the first-ever major MMA card with a women's main event — to be broadcast on Showtime — will take place, on August 15 at San Jose's HP Pavil

ion: Gina Carano vs. Christiane Santos for the Strikeforce 145-pound championship.

Let the record show that Carano, who is good-looking and charismatic, also has real ble world-class skills, with a background in Muay Thai, an Asian striking sport in which she competed before turning into female MMA's first crossover media star and glamour girl. "Conviction" Carano against "Cyborg" Santos is one of the most eagerly anticipated men's or women's events of 2009.

Irwin Mushnik, Berkeley

Re: Over at Berkeley High"

Words Matter

I am a 53 year-old African-American human rights/civil rights activist. I was born and grew up in the segregated South. Predicting what happened at Berkeley High School is why for years I have pleaded with (and to no avail) African American teens to avoid use of the words nigger and niggas. If a subculture desensitizes itself to degrading words, why would that subculture expect others to behave differently? Eve Shames, the student school board representative, said it best. "He said something really stupid ... but he has been getting the message for four strong years that it is okay to say it." I believe that certain words cannot be redeemed. It's been 46 years since I first heard the word nigger and I still wince whether I hear it in a song lyric or from the mouths of children. Words matter. Select them carefully.

Alfreda Wright, Oakland

re: 6/17

What About Biodiesel?

Interesting article on biofuels. However, in the second paragraph, you lump biodiesel in with ethanol but never again in the article. You also fail to mention that biodiesel is often made from recycled cooking oil, like the biodiesel sold commercially in Berkeley. Vehicles running on biodiesel run twice as efficient as comparable gas or ethanol vehicles. The main reason the City of Berkeley ended its seven-year experiment with biodiesel was because of their use of lower-grade biodiesel with a high bacteria content that was causing mechanical issues with their vehicles. Although European cities use biodiesel, Berkeley was the first city worldwide to use the fuel for its entire fleet, and at least two other cities, Telluride, Colorado, and Coconut Creek, Florida, have also followed suit. How about an article dealing with the pros and cons of biodiesel?

Jim Scott, Berkeley

Letters Policy

Please provide your full name, address, and daytime phone number, although we will only print your name, city, and affiliation. Send submissions to Letters@EastBayExpress.com or Letters, *East Bay Express*, 6120 3rd St., Oakland, CA 94607. Letters are edited for length and clarity.

Corrections

In our July 8 cover story, "What Is Killing the East Bay's Soul Food Restaurants?," we mistakenly stated that Lam Tara is closed when in fact it is still open.

In our July 8 music story, "Oakland Metro Operahouse Returns to Form," we misspelled the name of the Headbanger Foundation.

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OF MICHAEL JACKSON AND CESAR CHAVEZ

What is the legacy of the famous and flawed?

By Jay Youngdahl

What should we feel about people who inspire us and who command the respect of millions for their achievements against difficult odds yet who have engaged in personal activity that is worrisome or even repugnant to us?

Today's prominent example is Michael Jackson, an inspirational figure loved by many. For an African-American community that has fared extraordinary adversity and remains marginalized in much of our country Jackson is a hands-down hero. He succeeded in ways that spread doors for others. He fought racism and his own personal demons to produce sweet music and dazzling creativity. His body of work provided inspiration and enjoyment to millions around the world, including me. But Jackson's personal traits and activities must concern us especially for those who were touched by them. This dilemma of a flawed champion is being fought out in the court of public opinion and possibly in Congress, which will consider a proclamation in his honor.

So what are we to think of modern heroes with clay feet?

The struggle over Jackson's legacy reminds me of a more important dispute currently being played out albeit on a much lower profile stage, over how to consider the legacy of Cesar Chavez. How to remember and credit the works and life of Chavez is now the subject of a hard fought battle in the progressive community.

Like many socially conscious people of my generation I was active in the grape boycott of the 1970s in the cities in which I lived and worked. The boycott was a consumer campaign to elevate and protect the lives of farm workers who worked in those fields. The lives and struggles of farm workers resonated for many Americans. The grape boycott lead by Chávez was a way for people to actually do something about the conditions in the fields. It vindicated the concept of consumer boycotts that, up to that time, had only had sporadic successes in the union movement's "Do Not Buy" list and in African-American struggles, mainly in the South.

The name and image of Chávez have now become ubiquitous. To the credit of many US cities, any number of public facilities and roadways are named for Chávez. A simple Google Search for "César Chávez Oakland" brings up on the first page alone, a park, elementary center library gym chess workshop medical therapy clinic, and day all named for the labor leader.

Last year Randy Shaw who edits the useful BeyondChron.org web site, wrote a book on Chávez and the United Farmworkers Union called *Beyond the Fields*. Shaw ascribes great and lingering activity to the work of Chavez and his union. Shaw recently wrote that "many of the ideas, tactics, and strategies that Chávez and the UFW initiated or revived — including the boycott, clergy-labor partnerships, and grassroots voter outreach, particularly toward Latinos — are now so commonplace that their roots in the farm workers movement are forgotten." Shaw also believes that the UFW was "the era's leading incubator of young activist talent" many of whom who are active in social movements today.

Shaw's vision of Chávez and the UFW is being challenged by another progressive writer and activist, Michael Yates. Yates an editor at the *Monthly Review* and the author of the important book, *Why Unions Matter*, is highly critical of Chávez and Shaw's history of Chávez and the UFW. Yates argues that most of the strategies and behaviors that Shaw credits to Chávez and the UFW have, in such original description Yates also contends that while the UFW had an extraordinary run it was brought down by Chávez's "dictatorial hateful, and ruinous behavior." Chávez, Yates contends, became influenced by the leader of the cult like group Synanon. Using Synanon mind-control tactics, Yates claims Chávez brought charges against so-called "enemies" of the union and had at least one of these "enemies" arrested when he asked for his rights under the union constitution. For Yates, Chávez's personal flaws have left not a shining legacy but one that is highly tarred. "A charitable description of today's UFW is that it has become a quasi-racket," Yates claims.

Yates argues that the real story of the UFW is a tragedy. The union began in a blaze of glory but has had little or no lasting effect in the lives of the workers. Yates credits the UFW for its successes in the fields and for the passage of the California farm workers' labor law. However Yates writes, "Today, farm workers in California are no better off than they were before the union came on the scene. They still don't often have paid fifty; they still suffer the same job-related injuries and illnesses they still don't have unions; they are still at the bottom of the labor market barrel." Shaw disagrees and while he is critical of some of Chávez's personal characteristics, is much more charitable to his legacy.

I never met Chávez, though I have known many who worked with him. The debate about his "true" history is interesting to me, but it is not the real point. For me and millions of others, Chavez was an image and an idea. He is present in my psyche as part of a narrative about the ability of the salt of the earth to try and construct a life, marked by justice and dignity. The grape boycott and the UFW were a reality that became an idea, an idea that gripped the masses. Chávez was its personification.

Realities quickly become images. Images then influence reality and this cycle continues.

Those who inspire us and who personify ideals that motivate us all have issues. When I first became acquainted with ancient Greek tragedies I was surprised to see their emphasis on the trials and tribulations of the successful. Two thousand years ago the writers of those works seemed to recognize that even the greatest are tortured by difficult personal foibles, which often have deleterious effects on others. So should we.

Frankly an unprocessionistic view of Chávez is all we need. I feel the same about Michael Jackson. I will retain the image of the wonderful sounds of the Jackson 5 and his later work. I think that is enough. ●

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JOHN YOO AUTHORIZED ILLEGAL WIRETAPS

A new report confirms long-held suspicions about the UC Berkeley law school professor. Plus, California is still broke and Oakland's finances are about to get worse.

By Robert Gammon

UC Berkeley law school professor John Yoo has long been known as the legal architect of the nation's torture program. And for the past few years, legal scholars also have suspected that he was behind the warrantless wiretapping program developed under President Bush. But those suspicions were not officially confirmed until a new report was released last week.

The report, prepared by five inspectors general of federal governmental agencies, revealed that Yoo wrote two informal memos in September and October in 2001 and a formal one in November of that year, telling Bush that he could order federal authorities to listen in on Americans' phone conversations without a warrant. Yoo was working in the Department of Justice at the time and was only one of three department lawyers who knew about the top-secret program. According to the *Washington Post*, Yoo's legal opinions on the subject became known in the intelligence community as "the scary memos." But Yoo's work on warrantless wiretaps failed to produce actionable intelligence in the so-called War on Terror, according to the report. And just as Yoo's torture memos were later repudiated and rescinded by succeeding Bush-era lawyers for being shoddy and downright wrong, so was his work on warrantless wiretaps.

Yoo, however, apparently will not be prosecuted in US courts — even though listening to phone conversations without a warrant and waterboarding prisoners are illegal under US and international laws. According to the *Post* and *The New York Times*, President Obama's Attorney General Eric Holder is thinking about launching a torture investigation but the probe apparently will not target Yoo. Bush officials who developed the torture regime. That means Yoo also may remain at UC Berkeley indefinitely because the university has said it will not attempt to remove him unless he's convicted of a crime.

California Is a National Joke

California reached a new low late last week when several large banks stopped honoring state-issued IOUs. The banks' decision added further insult to a state that is fast becoming the laughingstock of the nation. The move by the banks also means that taxpayers and private companies that received IOUs will have to wait until the legislature solves the budget crisis before they can cash them.

The banks' decision also triggered a black market on eBay and Craigslist in which unscrupulous vendors have been paying desperate taxpayers and businesses pennies on the dollar for their IOUs in hopes of making a profit when California is finally solvent again. The fear that this black market will get out of hand also prompted the US Securities and Exchange Commission to announce that it will attempt to regulate the buying and selling of IOUs, according to the *San Francisco Chronicle*.

Bad News for Oakland Cops

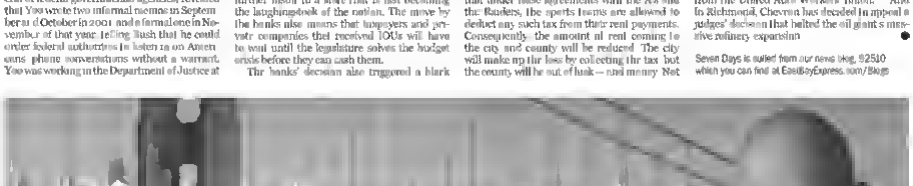
Oakland city officials learned that they will receive no more than about one-third of a federal grant needed to avoid laying off 140 police officers. Oakland had asked for $67 million over three years to pay for the 140 cops, but according to the *Oakland Tribune*, federal officials capped the amount of money each city can receive to no more than 50 officers per department. That means the city will receive a maximum of about $24 million over three years. And Oakland will be lucky to get that much because the feds received an overwhelming number of requests from other cities.

Oakland, meanwhile, also is attempting to hijack revenue from the Oakland-Alameda County Coliseum that traditionally has gone to Alameda County. According to the *Trib*, Oakland plans to begin collecting an 18.5 percent tax on Coliseum parking. The only problem is that under lease agreements with the A's and the Raiders, the sports teams are allowed to deduct any such tax from their rent payments. Consequently, the amount of rent coming to the city and county will be reduced. The city will make up the loss by collecting the tax, but the county will be out of luck — and money. Not surprisingly, the county has decided to sue.

Three-Dot Roundup

Speaking of lawsuits, ex-Oakland City Administrator Deborah Edgerly also is suing Oakland, alleging that Mayor Ron Dellums fired her because she had refused requests by his wife, Cynthia Dellums, to pay her cell phone bill and to hire some of the mayor's cronies. Edgerly, however, has serious credibility problems and appears to be looking for a payout after she failed in her bid to get a job in a small town back east. . . . The Oakland City Council approved a plan that calls for taller buildings in downtown, although it's unclear whether that will actually happen. . . . In fact, according to a new analysis by the *Chron*, former Oakland Mayor Jerry Brown's 10K plan fell well short of its goal to add 10,000 new residents to downtown. The paper estimated that because of the housing crash, only about 5,000 new residents had moved into the downtown area since 1999 — not counting all those who left. . . . As for Brown, the attorney general sought to quell a mini-scandal in his bid to become the next governor when he returned more than $80,000 in campaign donations made by the friends and businesses of people that his office is investigating. . . . In Fremont, Toyota threatened to close the NUMMI auto plant in a move that appeared to be designed to extract concessions from the United Auto Workers union. . . . And in Richmond, Chevron has decided to appeal a judges' decision that halted the oil giant's massive refinery expansion. ●

Seven Days is culled from our news blog, 02510, which you can find at EastBayExpress.com/Blogs.



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The Oakland Port has spent millions helping truckers replace old trucks with new ones. hyndquest, Flickr (CC)

ECO WATCH

IS BIGGER BETTER WHEN IT COMES TO TRUCKING?

Coalition trying to clean emissions at port thinks that the proliferation of small truckers feeds the problem

By Robert Gammon

Small is big in the environmental movement. It's widely accepted, for example, that mom-and-pop organic farms are more eco-friendly than large factory farms. And there's no doubt that small, independent businesses that make communities vibrant are more sustainable than corporate giants who exploit workers and the environment. Yet it turns out that small and independent may not always be best, particularly when it comes to the Port of Oakland and pollution-belching trucks.

In fact, a group of East Bay environmentalists has teamed up with organized labor to push for a plan that could ultimately put thousands of small, independent truckers out of business. The Coalition for Clean & Safe Ports argues that independent truckers simply can't afford to replace their older diesel-spewing trucks, which have polluted West Oakland for decades and led to dramatically high asthma rates among area children.

Consequently, the coalition is backing a plan that would ultimately replace most of the 3,000 small, independent truckers at the port with large trucking companies that have the financial wherewithal to meet new state emissions standards and, up to the port's recent ban on gross polluters. "It is about who can pay for the cost of cleaning up the truck fleet," explained Doug Bloch, who is director of the coalition and a labor organizer.

Last month the Oakland Port Commission banned trucks made before 1994, and required that those produced between 1994 and 2003 be retrofitted to control tailpipe emissions. The new rules essentially mirror those adopted by the California Air Resources Board. The port is still working out the details of how it enforce the truck ban, but it most likely will result in terminal operators refusing to allow older trucks at the seaport and forcing drivers of newer trucks to prove that they meet the new standards.

The coalition supported the truck ban, but says it won't have the desired effect unless trucking is overhauled at the port. The problem will become especially acute in 2014 when all trucks built before 2008 will be banned. Small operators, the coalition argues, simply don't have the money to buy new trucks at $125,000 apiece. "The bottom line is — who is going to pay to clean up the air?" Bloch said.

But the coalition's plans are being met by stiff opposition by local truckers. Bill Aboudi, owner of Oakland-based AB Trucking, noted that in a recent study commissioned by the port, most independent truckers said they don't want to give up their businesses and go to work for a larger company. And he argued that the coalition's campaign is really about organized labor and the Teamsters and not the environment. "It's simple," he said. "The labor movement is trying to unionize small businesses."

Aboudi also argued that small, owner-operated trucking companies have a bigger incentive to retrofit their trucks, and thus clean up the air. If their trucks are banned, they're effectively out of business. "With the owner operators, the truck is their bread and butter," he said.

But the coalition points out that the same recent study revealed that there is a glut of trucks at the port because there are too many independent operators competing against each other, thereby worsening air pollution in West Oakland. The report, completed earlier this spring, concluded that switching to larger trucking companies would lessen the number of trucks at the port because those businesses won't flood West Oakland with lots of trucks vying to undersell each other.

The coalition says the problem can be solved if the port adopts a plan similar to the one implemented last year at the Port of Los Angeles. In October the LA port commission approved a so-called concession/employee model in which most owner-operated truck companies were to be replaced by larger firms that employ dozens if not hundreds of truck drivers. Organized labor including the Teamsters, supported the plan and fully *Continued on page 10*

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CITY OF OAKLAND SPECIAL ELECTION ENDOKSEMENT

At the MGO June 16th 2009 general meeting MGO club members endorsed the following ballot measures at the July 21 City of Oakland Special (Mail in) Election

YES on

- **MEASURE C**, adding a 3% surcharge to the Hotel Tax to fund the new Oakland Museum and Chabot Space and Science Center
- **MEASURE D** amending the Charter to require the City to set aside 3% of annual unrestricted general purpose fund revenues for grants to children s and youth s services.
- **MEASURE F** which imposes a new tax rate on cannabis of $18 per $1000 of gross receipts up from $1 20 per $1000
- **MEASURE H** which amends the real property transfer tax to clarify that the tax applies to transfers of real property caused by changes in ownership or control of corporations and other legal entities such as merger and acquisitions

VOTE TODAY—MAIL IN BALLOT DUE BY JULY 21ST

MGO is an independent grass roots Democratic club that heard presentations and studied the ballot measures A 60% vote was required for endorsement Be part of the action by the candidates or ballot measure supporters or opponents.

The MGO Democratic Club holds general membership meetings every third Thursday of the month with some exceptions For more information please visit our website www mgoclub org

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Is Bigger Better When it Comes to Trucking?

Continued from page 8

acknowledged that it wants to unionize truck drivers. Union reps say that big shipping companies exploit small, underpaid truckers by pitting them against each other and driving down prices. Environmentalists supported the plan because they viewed it as the most efficient way to replace dirty, older trucks in Southern California.

However, the American Trucking Associations, a trade group that represents truckers nationwide, immediately sued the Port of LA, alleging that its plan violated federal law. In March of this year, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals in San Francisco sided with the trucking group, and effectively struck down the LA port plan. The court said that when Congress deregulated the trucking industry in the 1980s, it prohibited states or ports from adopting rules that regulate truckers' unless it concerns vehicle safety. The court also struck down a similar plan adopted by the Port of Long Beach. The two ports are the largest on the West Coast, and are the Port of Oakland's main competitors.

Realizing that the court's ruling also prohibits Oakland from adopting LA's model, the East Bay environmental and labor coalition now wants the Oakland Port Commission to lobby Congress to change federal law. The group says that California's entire Democratic Congressional delegation wants to allow ports to regulate trucking. In a March letter, Congressional representatives from the Bay Area wrote a letter to Port of Oakland Executive Director Omar Benjamin, pointing to the Port of LA's model as being "a comprehensive and sustainable approach."

For its part, the Port of Oakland appears ready to endorse the coalition's proposal. At last week's port commission meeting, commission President Victor Uno, who also is a labor organizer, instructed port staff to come up with a resolution that would urge Congress to give ports more power over trucking.

Independent truckers are sure to oppose the move. Abood argued that switching to larger trucking companies won't solve the problem of too many trucks at the port. He said that bigger companies avoid the port because it's a headache. Trucks often sit idling for half the day, waiting to be loaded or unloaded. He also said that big companies steer clear of the port because they don't want the hassle of dealing with dozens of different shipping companies and multiple terminals.

But Bloch countered that larger companies avoid the port because they can't compete against independent operators who have no overhead costs. That would change, he said, if the port were to adopt the emission/employee model like LA. Last fall, after LA implemented its new model, two of the largest trucking companies, Swift Transportation and Knight Trucking, immediately applied to become concessionaires, he said. "They were hungry because there is money to be made," he said.

Finally, Bloch argued that the larger trucking companies also have an incentive to exert pressure on the shipping companies and terminal operators to work more efficiently. After all, they're not going to want their hourly truck drivers to sit idling at the docks. And, of course, less truck idling will result in less pollution in Oakland. ●

Got green ideas? Send tips or stories to EcoWatch@EastBayExpress.com

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SUBCULTURES

BEST OF THE EAST BAY 2009

In the era of social networking, satellite radio, and DIY everything, there is no more mass market. There are only smaller and more numerous subcultures. In Subcultures, our 2009 Best of the East Bay, we've focused on about 400 of the people, places, companies, and subcultures that make the East Bay so culturally diverse and intellectually rich.

Items by East Bay Express staff and contributors. Photographs by Chris Duffey.

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ARTS + CULTURE



Best bluegrass bar: Monday night jam at McGrath's Irish Pub

Chris Duffey

STOUTEST DANCEHALL DJ WITH INTERNATIONAL FLAVOR

DJ Fuze

MySpace.com/TheOriginalDJFuze

No one can rock a party like DJ Fuze, one of the few Bay Area legends who still sustains himself primarily through hip-hop. Born on the East Coast, Fuze moved to the Bay in time to attend Berkeley High School. He learned his craft as a teen while prep-cooking at frou-frou restaurants, and ultimately graduated to Digital Underground and the late Tupac Shakur. Fuze even toured with Oakland model group the Luniz during its heyday. After decades of hanging with celebrities, witnessing the dissolute hip-hop lifestyle and still managing to keep his head on his shoulders, Fuze decided to expand his musical taste by getting into African and Caribbean music. Thus began his international parties at Club Oasis, a popular West African restaurant and nightclub in downtown Oakland. Fuze held court there for several years, spinning everything from soukous to bhangra to Afrobeat, mixing songs that you'll only hear overseas with slamjam beats from home, and throwing in some commercial fare when the party really gets going. His monthly party, called Extra Stout Dancehall, also features Kenyan DJ Imperial and Senegalese DJ Omar. For three years it's been one of the most vibrant club nights in Oakland, and one of the few that draws a genuinely mixed crowd. Not to mention that the music — unlike that of most DJ dance parties — is fascinating and inspiring. Club Oasis is temporarily closed for remodeling, so Fuze might be looking to take his Extra Stout party elsewhere. In the meantime, he spins every third Friday at the nearby dancehall venue Caribbean City, and occasionally graces Leweele East in Old Oakland.

BEST BAND

Albino!

Albino@and.com

In the early Sixties when Fela Kuti created Afrobeat — a deeply rhythmic horn-drenched blend of funk, jazz and African highlife — he may not have imagined what it would one day become. Even at his peak as a pop star, he was more concerned with serving as a voice for Nigeria's poor, making him an enemy of the state and a subject of frequent harassment. But his powerful, propulsive music has persevered through the decades and at the hands of countless imitators. Berkeley Afrobeat ensemble Albino! took more than a few cues from Kuti all the way down to his politics. Songs like "Democracy," "Puppet Boy" and "No Face Enemy" deliver indictments of governmental corruption. But even less subtle than the band's message is its music, a spring wound so tight it grooves from one phrase to the next with the resolve of a locomotive. While that's easy enough to explain in a modern studio, Albino! is the real deal: the six-year-old group's second album, *Peralta House*, released in May, was recorded live with all eleven members in the same room at the same time, and its lurking drums, striking guitars, and swirling horns never miss a beat.

BEST RAPPER/PRODUCER

Erk tha Jerk

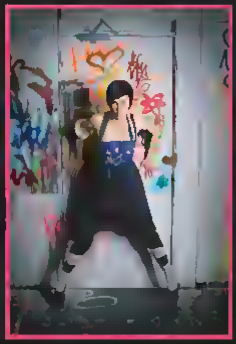
MySpace.com/ErkthaJerk

Local hood nerd Erk tha Jerk experienced fleeting popularity last year when two of his songs — the hyphy diss "I'm So Dumb" and the slow-paced slumper "Don't Need 'Em" — spent a few weeks in regular rotation on KMEL. A couple months later he dropped an even better track, "Plane in the Air," which featured guest vocals by Too Short and a noisy, disorienting beat that poured a snare drum with a weird honking sound. With those three songs alone, Erk established himself as a force to be reckoned with. His has a distinctive, growly voice, odd but flows, snarky lyrics, and a wry sense of humor — ("Don't Need 'Em" includes a well-placed sample from Snoop Dogg's "Ain't No Fun (If the Homies Can't Have None).") Moreover, he generated an image and a raft of personality that other rappers are constantly trying to imitate (the popular Los Angeles group New Boyz might have ripped their skinny jeans look

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and "I'm a Jerk" anthem from someone other than Erk, but the similarity is fishy enough that Erk had his clown them on his MySpace page). Erk hasn't released many new solo tracks this year, but he's been hard at work in the studio creating freaks and edgies, then tweaky. Erk inevitably, haughtily himself how to make beats because he couldn't find enough producers who fit his aesthetic sensibility. Now he produces most of his own work and also shapes the sound of Berkeley based R&B artist Netis B. The Head Nerd EP established Erk as a dissed and satirist, but in the coming years he'll hopefully have a lot more to offer.

READERS SAY THE DARNDEST THINGS

BEST ALBUM

Green Day: 21st Century Breakdown

You can't beat home-grown rock operas. — *T'Aboriginal*

Sweetbread

They have more soul in one finger than Green Day can pack in a stadium. — *Gina Arrarmar*

BEST ART GALLERY

Johanssen Project

There's grass on the ceiling! OK, seriously ... they stay Oakland edgy, but without giving up any integrity of showing real art. — *b b*

Pro Arts

Pro Arts. — *Hiroko Kurihara*

Rock Paper Scissors

I once saw a suitcase full of hot dogs there. Works for me. — *Justin Champion*

BEST ARTS ORGANIZATION

10,000 Steps

Connecting downtown history and community through art installations at the historic parks. — *Jonathan Bair*

California Revels

An incredible celebration of the solstice through community, ritual, music and dance. — *Theresa Nelson*

Destiny Arts Center

Serves all kids from all walks of life, fostering violence prevention through dance and martial arts. The real deal. — *Karen Hester*

Independent Arts & Media

Put on the annual Expo for the Arts in Frisco, helps local arts & media like MRR, Gilman, *Hyphen* Magazine, Counter Corp Film Fest 2009-06-18 — *Jesse Towning*

MOCHA

Arts for kids, no brainer — *Jesse Rivers*

Oaklandish

They represent — *Daniel Schulman*

Shawl-Anderson Modern Dance Center

Few dance studios that provide such a high caliber of classes are also so welcoming and joyous! — *Amanda Whitehead*

READERS POLL WINNERS

BEST ALBUM
Green Day
21st Century Breakdown

BEST ART GALLERY
Pro Arts

BEST ARTS ORGANIZATION
Rock Paper Scissors Collective

BEST ARTSY CAFE
Mama Buzz

BEST BAND
Green Day

BEST BLOGGER
A Better Oakland

BEST BOOK
Michael Pollan In Defense of Food

BEST CHURCH MUSIC
Oakland Interfaith Gospel Choir

BEST CLUB
Yoshi's

BEST CONCERT VENUE
Paramount Theater

BEST DANCE CLUB
Ashkenaz

BEST EVENT
First Friday Art Murmur

BEST FESTIVAL
Art & Soul

BEST JUKEBOX
Bette's Oceanview Diner

BEST MUSEUM
Oakland Museum of California

BEST MUSIC ANTHOLOGY
Rave Choice

BEST NEW CULTURE SCENE
First Friday Art Murmur

BEST PAINTER
J.B. Lowe

BEST PERFORMER
Nobunny

BEST PHOTOGRAPHER
Nan Phelps

BEST PURVEYOR OF LOCAL CRAFTS
Rock Paper Scissors Collective

BEST SCULPTOR
J.B. Lowe

BEST SINGER OR MC
Too $hort

BEST THEATRICAL PRODUCTION
***Faust* at Ashby Stage**

BEST WAREHOUSE PARTIES
You Know Who You Are

BEST DJ

D Sharp

MySpace.com/DJDsharp

It isn't often that you see Charles Lloyd free-jazz records stashed among the old-school breaks and house hits in a DJ's record collection. (Granted, it's become increasingly rare to find a DJ with a physical record collection, now that Serato Scratch has become the main stock in trade.) But D Sharp came up in the era of crate-digging, and unlike many of his contemporaries, he's a scholar of multiple music genres with an encyclopedic knowledge of hip-hop. Sharp is one of those DJs who could not only name a sample but also tell you exactly when the original record dropped, then describe the picture on the record jacket. In addition to his successful DJ career (he's toured with Blackalicious, Flipsyde, and the Lanryn Hill band, among others), he's also a sought-after producer and indie mogul. Having launched the hip-hop label Urban Republic (which holds rappers Nerve and Mr. Town within its stable), Sharp's syncopated production style and creative use of samples (as a rhythmic element rather than a backdrop) betrays a real understanding of music. Word around town is he's not cheap, but he's definitely worth it.

BEST AGGREGATOR OF MAINSTREAM RAP AND THE THUG LIFE

The Jacka

MySpace.com/TheJackaMobFigaz

Self made artist the Jacka built a small empire by selling records hand-to-hand and pumping his criminal past. (He's an "Jacka artist" in many senses.) Now he's spotlighted on mainstream radio stations with such hits as "All Over Me" and "Glamorous Lifestyle," which features underground kingpin Andre Nickatina. The Jacka is a classical gangsta rapper, known less for prurience (though in fairness he's no prude) than for angrily pol'tized hustler anthems, revenge songs against the police, and lyrics about his devotion to Islam. His first two albums got their texture and shape from Mob Figaz producer Rob Lo, whose melodic beats formed a perfect juxtaposition to Jacka's scratchy, half-sung rap voice. This year however the Pittsburg-raised artist went a little more mainstream. His new album *Tour Gas* includes celebrity guest cameos (Paul Wall, Freeway, and Devin the Dude) and beats sampled from the Doors and the Beastie Boys. It's still unmistakably a Jacka album though as this one the Jacka hews a little more to the hot rapper persona. But why settle for small time crooker, after you've reached Billboard a Top 100? The Jacka inevitably has more successes to come.

BEST ELECTRO ACOUSTIC LIVE ACT

Ted the Block

MySpace.com/TedTheBlock

Winston Goertz-Coffen of Saything (the atypical Oakland thought rock band) is Ted the Block, a one-man band that floats around the Oakland art scene playing house shows, galleries and "the occasional neighborhood bar" he says — fun shows that are free (or almost free) for all who want to listen. His musical inventions, like a crackly reverse-feed headphone-microphone and unusual archestration combine to form soulful electro-acoustic pop that is accessible and moving. In his most recent performance at a party house, he astonished a crowd of die-ll yourself art punks musicians and flannel-clad hikers with his free-jazz-style trumpeting and ambient synthesizer tones. From the corner of the smoky and lovely crowded attic, he poured out waves of looped and distorted electric guitar and vocal melodies that seemed to leave every onlooker starry-eyed and spellbound. That said, instead of finding his songs on the Internet, find him at Mama Buzz (he's the one in the motorcycle jacket, with the big blue eyes smoking a cig in the patio) and get yourself a free MP3a pole in comparison to the brilliance of this young rocker's live show.

BEST MUSICIAN WITH A CAUSE

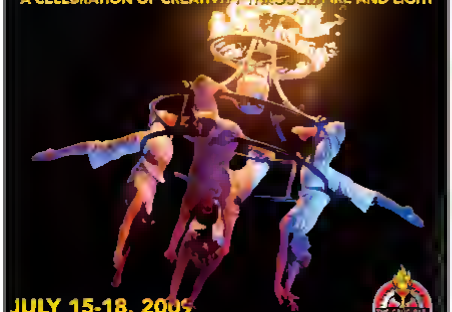
Fossil Fool, The Bike Rapper

888-354-2673 RocktheBike.com

Based at Rock the Bike, a grassroots Berkeley manufacturer of all things pedal-powered this man has created a world where bikes are cool. Escalades are lame, and pedal-powered rap is the hottest ticket in town. He is Fossil Fool. The Bike Rapper. As much an environmentalist and engineer as an artist, Fossil Fool plays impromptu street gigs where he sings about bikes, going places on bikes and partying with bikes. The Fool rides a home-built pedal-powered chopper named the Chopped Fish whose rear hub is multi-geared to an electric generator: the bike is fitted on a mutant makeover numbers pedal Fossil Fool raps, and the PA system sounds. In his tuner life at Rock the Bike Fossil Fool is known as Paul Freedman who has invented and innovated a wide range of bike-powered accessories, including bike-powered blenders, bike-powered sound systems, bike-powered lights and super sturdy sport utility bikes. Rock the Bike reveals all the practical possibilities of living in a world without combustion engines, where bikes are cool, cars suck, and music strengthens your quads.



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Prezident Brown ft. Andrew Diamond ~ Ras Michael ~ Medicine Drum ~
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READERS SAY THE DARNDEST THINGS

BEST ARTSY CAFE

As opposed to what other kind of cafes? Dive cafes?

— Bridget

Awaken Cafe

Perfect espresso, delicious sandwiches, zesty staff, and local art on the walls. What more could you want? *— Brandon Darrow*

Cafe 504

It's a wine bar for coffee. It's Blue Bottle without the pretension. *— Matt R*

Local 123

Finally, a lovely little spot for people to hang out on San Pablo! *— Christa*

Mama Buzz

Best coffee, most hipsters *— Jade*

Nomad Cafe

Poetry Readings *— Amanda*

Root Cafe

Root is a place to get great coffee without surly-hipster-service. *— Daniel McChesney-Young*

BEST BAND

Carrie Cruzis

Most original, and with a conscience! *— Daniel del Solar*

Green Day

First I thought my kids were into my music, now I realize I am into THEIR music. *— Joe DeVries*

High on Fire

Because they effing rock! *— Jessica Jordan*

MRNelson

Have you heard them? Blow your brains out! *— Patricia Wakida*

Obiebis

They invade your mind with awesomeness. *— Emily Harrison*

Primitivas

4 hot dicks playing LOUD garage punk. *— Mitch Cornwell*

The Von Trapps

They play the songs you know that you want to hear but are afraid to admit it! *— Kevin Soto*

Why?

Yoni has the heart of Oakland lodged in his throat. *— Bree Phillips*

BEST COVER BAND

Zoo Station: The U2 Experience

ZooStation-Online.com

Armed with the hardware, software, and meanwear essential to mimicking the biggest band that jams, Zoo Station: The U2 Experience takes its act far beyond a simple repertoire of fewer hits. This quartet, which rehearses in Berkeley and regularly rocks at Dana in Walnut Creek, dresses like U2, talks like U2, poses for photos like U2, and trims its hair like U2 except for guitarist the Sledge who wears a skullcap. Bonnimoet is arguably a sharper singer than his aging rock star counterpart, with a range that nails the highest notes that Bono ever reached in the 1980s. But it's the band's entire collaborative effort that brings performances to life — the chromed clouds of guitar, the swaggering bass of Adamesque, the rock hard drums of Butch Larry, and the computerized loops and pre-programmed samples from an underappreciated laptop computer that furtively works the rear of the stage. With a live repertoire of 150 hit singles and obscure B-sides, Zoo Station walks a fine line, recreating the biggest sounds of modern U2 while evoking the days when a teenaged U2 rocked the basements of Dublin.

BEST SINGER

Stephanie Crawford

StephanieCrawfordJazz.com

Roughly a decade after ending an illustrious career in Paris, Stephanie Crawford is gradually making inroads in the Bay Area jazz scene. She's still relatively unknown and unheralded, but a rare gem of a singer nonetheless. Play her new album, *The Real Thing*, for any jazz purist and you'll hear comments about the texture of her voice — it's pliable, deep, sweet, impassioned, and a little pained, bathing back to famed bebop vocalist Betty Carter. In the local scene, Crawford stands alone with her emotional heft, immutable way of phrasing, and unique tune selection. *The Real Thing* comprises the most un-obvious of standards and old show tunes: "Cinnamon and Clove," a Johnny Mandel tune that Sergio Mendes covered in the 1960s; C. Coleman's "When in Rome" and a cheeky little opener called "Devil May Care," made popular by vocalist Bob Dorough. It's a project that many of her songs defy Google searches, as Crawford seems more comfortable dwelling in obscurity. She's still wonderful.

BEST DANCE JOINT AT WHICH TO HEAR REAL SMOKIN' LOUISIANA MUSIC

Eagles Hall

Every Friday Night, 2305 Alameda Ave., Alameda 415-285-4265

SFZydeco.com/Eagles/content-eagles.htm

The Eagles may be a few rent versus of the Lions, but they have one of the best damn dance floors in the East Bay and without a doubt the best music. When else could you hear Dikky Du and the Zydeco Crawe or Leroy Thomas and the Zydeco Roadrunners, real down home bands from southwest Louisiana or Texas? A lot of zydeco and Cajun bands have been coming here since the great migration that fueled the Richmond and Oakland shipyards in World War II. The Eagles Hall is one of the few places you will actually see regular black and white folks in the same place at the same time dancing and mingling. (Be warned — the average age of the crowd is at least in the forties.) Be prepared to learn how to dance and do it humbly. Leave your hipster snootiness at the door. If you don't, Dana DeSimone, dance instructor extraor-

dimsire, will thrash it right out of yun He hung out at Ihr Fuh Mah in the early 1980s and could probably whnp your butt Be prepared In dance your nss off all night and be prepared to learn be led and be back led This is serious couples dancing with a sense of humor Shows run about $15 — for that you get a full four or five hours of straight rocking zydeco Takr that, standard concerts that only give you nasty nnnutes for $40!

BEST BLUEGRASS BAR

McGrath's Irish Pub

1538 Lincoln Ave Alameda 510-522-6263
McGrathsPub.com

You ll get a heaping helpnng of pickin and grinnin with your beer at that Lincoln Avenue hangout We all know McGrath s is a sure-bet fun night with its weird Intsch decor (including an impressive array of antique model airplanes) and the charming Alameda local color that s regularly in attendance. Lesser known is the burgeoning bluegrass music community that s built up around weekly Monday-night jams, which the bar's web site touts as "the Bay Area's best" — and they are! Several thriving bluegrass projects have splintered off from the regular Monday night sessions which are religiously attended by pickers and fiddlers both young and old from around the greater Bay Area There are two rooms — one for more serious pickers, and one where a huge circle of jammers forms for an all-out all comers hootenanny Don't be shy — everybody s welcome to take a turn leading a song. Check out The Kentucky Twisters and Grizzly Peak, two new bands of gray hnirs that met at the jam sessions over the past years

SUBCULTURES
BEST OF THE EAST BAY 2009

BEST MUSIC SCHOOL

The Jazzschool

2087 Addison St., Berkeley 510-845-5372.
Jazzschool.com

Since its 2002 move to the spacious S.H Kress building on Addison Street, this music school performance space and cultural center has been the heart of the revived Downtown Berkeley Arts Distnct Whether you re tone-deaf and curious, or already a working musician the Jazzschool provides courses for students of all ages and levels in disciplines like History, history, composition, literature, and performance in a wide variety of instruments. And as a nanpeofit committed to nurturing community and contributing to Say Area cultural life they offer frequent performance opportunities for students and pros alike Better yet the school provides scholarships to 15 percent of its students, making precious private music lessons accessible to kids from low-income families. With the faculty roster naming some of the Bay Area's most accomplished musicians and an advisory board graced by the legendary Dave Brubeck the Iauschool provides a rare opportunity for beginning students to learn from masters

BEST PLACE TO HANG OUT ON A MONDAY NIGHT

The White Horse Inn

6551 Telegraph Ave., Oakland. 510-652-3820.
WhiteHorseBar.com

The nation s second-oldest (and perhaps the Bay's least-pretentious) gay bar is a guaranteed good time n ost nights of the week. But on a mellow Monday night you can't find much better entertainment anywhere than a six hour-long happy hour followed by gay karaoke with DJ Whirl Bone if karaoke exuded in the superstylish Castro, it would no doubt be overrun by fit, hair-gelled Diesel-wearing *American Idol* hopefuls But in true White Horse style, Monday night karaoke is a refreshingly laid back anti-scene where you can find big hugs butchies, bears, divas, and everyone in between singing perfectly offkey and drinking cheap cocktails. Gay or straight, talented or tone-deaf It is nearly impossible not to feel at home here.

BEST PUNK ROCK DIVE BAR WITH CHEAP ASS FOOD

Eli's Mile High Club

3629 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., Oakland
MySpace.com/ElisMileHighClub

When historic blues bar Eli's Mile High Club shut its doors last year Jason Herbers and Geoff Melville seized the opportunity to reopen the club with a rock n roll twist They stuffed the jukebox with punk, metal and blues and opened a kitchen to serve up food. Eli's was once again a hangout for beer lovers and nightcrawlers with a purchant for imbibing liquor to loud tunes. "Much of the East Bay punk and metal scene has made it their own" said co-owner Herbst.ss. "We took it over with the vision of having a place with a wide variety of music, good food, and cheap drinks." Although the Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control currently restricts the bar's weekday hours to 12 p m 11 a m on weekends,the bar compensates for an early last call with a daily happy hour ($1 beers, $3 well drinks); ever-changing drink specials (mini margarita shots sweet tea cocktails) n huge backyard patio and great, greasy bar food ($7 a quadruple-stack cheeseburger or a shrimp po boy). On Wednesdays and Saturdays, the bar plays 1970s and 1980s punk tunes Tuesdays and Sundays are soul/reggae-themed, and on most nights a projector shines random horror movies and skate videos on the wall. Come for good drinks, stay for good times.

BEST VENUE

Fox Theater

1807 Telegraph Ave Oakland, 510-548-3010.
TheFoxOakland.com

Wow! What a difference $75 million makes. The Fox, built in 1928 as a movie house and closed in 1996, reopened in February with red-carpet hoopla and fanfare and Oakland s new and most impressive v.nue has been selling out shows with top-name class acts ever since. It's easy to see why because the redo of this Uptown icon and city landmark to its gold-leafed jewel bedecked Moorish splendor is fantastic from the domed chandeliers and painted ceiling down to the curtains and carpet Stunning restoration smart modern touches Everything about the new Fox is well planned: Three bars on the ground level and

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Readers Say the Darndest Things

BEST BLOGGER

A Better Oakland

Getting the facts right when Full Disclosure gets them wrong since 2007 — *MoreAdmah*

Claire Light, clairelight.typepad.com/sealight/

Racial politics, East Bay art reviews, media watchdog, sex-fi writing. She's awesome. — *Patricia Watkins*

Inhuman Eating Machine

There is something about one guy eating a crap-ton of food that is just awesome. — *Henry Gurwin*

Because facts are always funny. — *Kelly Thebaut*

Michele Elison, The Island

Elison's work covering the town of Alameda is simply incredible. I have no idea how she does it. — *Erika Schneider*

V Smooth — A Better Oakland

She's thorough, effective, and passionate! — *Cassaia Jacobs*

BEST BOOK

A Dirty Job

Demon fights on BART— need I say more? — *Colley Pedersen*

Michael Pollan, In Defense of Food

This book is the *Silent Spring* of the new century. — *Scott Roberts*

Leaving India — Minal Hajratwala

Delicious prose about the diaspora of Indian folks and her family in particular. — *Margo Rivera-Wells*

The Loneliness of the Electric Menorah

Aaron Cometbus' history of Telegraph Avenue. Easily the best writing to come out of this area in quite some time. — *Mitch Cardwell*

Bryant Terry, Vegan Soul Kitchen

Have you had any of the recipes? They unite me to vivacious (in a loving way...) — *Tiffany Golden*

comfy, homey seats mean there's not a bad spot in the house. The acoustics are great, and the sound system rocks as does backstage. Bars are in abundance so service is easy and frigid, air blasting floor vents keep the atmosphere circulating, even on the dance floor.

BEST TIGHTWAD CONCERT CLUB

The Den at the Fox Theater

11th St. & Telegraph Ave., Oakland
TheDenOakland.com

If your favorite act just sold out at the Fox Theater, don't despair. You don't necessarily have to miss the show. You can join other groupies who may be in the same boat and see the show for free — free! — on the big-screen TV at the Den at the Fox Theater. It's in real time, so even though you aren't in the heart of the action, you're as close as you can get. At no cost. Honest. You will have to drink out of plastic cups, but you'll be doing so at a pretty posh spot, and you can snack while you take in the show. The Den has lots of windows, high ceilings, tomato-hued walls, and comfy couches and seats for seating. It's a three-story hangout, and the grandeur of the Fox redo just a few feet away is carried out through this high-tech bar and lounge. Check out the old-timey levers that once operated the innards of the Fox.

BEST CULTURAL IMPROVEMENT

Another Planet Entertainment

APEConcerts.com

Would the Fox Theater be as successful without the genius of Berkeley-based music promoters Another Planet Entertainment? Likely not. The organizers behind the wildly successful Outside Lands Music & Arts Festival in Golden Gate Park that jam-packed, self-filled Treasure Island Music Festival and all the killer shows at the Greek Theatre as well as the Independent, Another Planet Entertainment has the golden touch, thanks to the lead ership of Gregg Perloff and his talented staff. Perloff was president and CEO of Bill Graham Presents but left in 2003 to start APE with fellow BGPers Sherry Wasserman (concert production) and Steve Welkom (business and admin). Together this group has the business of concert promotion and festival organization down to a science, producing more than 700 events and more than 1,000 shows in its relatively short history. APE this year has totally hit its stride as the Bay Area's preeminent music producer company and continues to build its star-studded reputation as the guru of concert promotion.

BEST CULTURAL FESTIVAL

Oakland Greek Festival

4700 Lincoln Ave., Oakland 510-531-3400
OaklandGreekFestival.com

Opa! The East Bay's best get-it-going-on cultural party of the year is the nearly forty-year-old shindig known as the Oakland Greek Festival, which happens every May at the Greek Orthodox Cathedral of the Ascension. Traffic on Lincoln and Highway 13 comes to a standstill for this three-day Greekfest that celebrates the food, drink, music, dances, products, customs, history, etc., of Greece while showing off the church and its grounds. Admission is cheap, so festivalgoers can put all their dough into buying gyros (always the longest line), rehirise, baklava, *spanakopita*, *saganaki* cheese, and other edible treats. Buy full dinners in the dining hall or better yet, stroll the *plaza* vendors and sample delicacies à la carte — lamb shops lamb sandwiches, calamari Mmm. Stop at the *taverna* for *ouzo* cocktails. Learn a folk dance for the chapel and then stop at the *kafeneion* for Greek coffee and pastries galore (order extra sweets to take home). Feels like being in Greece without even leaving the Oakland Hills.

BEST PLACE TO DO INDIAN DANCE AND POSSIBLY GET MARRIED OFF TO SOMEONE'S DAUGHTER

Navratri Garba

CSU Hayward, 25800 Carlos Bee Blvd Hayward. GCABayArea.com

Thanks to Slumdog, Madonna and Shah Rukh Khan eclipsing Jesus in world popularity all things India are finally trendy. But while Bollywood dance is all well and good (essentially hip-hop with a few arm movements stolen from folk and classical Indian dance) you can get in touch with your brown side authentically at CSU Hayward's Garba folk dance. Thrown over consecutive weekends by the Gujarati Cultural Association of the Bay Area, usually the first week of October the event transforms a basketball gym into a slopping, hopping, swirling mass of color. Young and old male and female gather in their newest *sehwar kameez* finery to twirl in giant circles, keeping the beat with bare feet and hand claps. The "Raas" version of the dance gives you *dandiyas*, colorful dancing sticks that you hit against another dancer's. It's all in celebration of the nine-day Navratri festival. But watch out for the knowing eyes of the Indian mama: if you've got your Garba groove on, look good in traditional wear and have a master's degree, you may well find yourself the object of their matchmaking desire.

BEST SYNAGOGUE MUSIC

Kehilla Community Synagogue

1300 Grand Ave Piedmont. 510-547-2424. KehillaSynagogue.org

Walking into Kehilla Community Synagogue at the conclusion of Rosh Hashanah morning services gives a utterly the wrong impression of Judaism. Rather than repetitious Hebrew blessings, overwrought intellectual homilies and soulless *niggunim* emanating from the bimah, a visitor would encounter a scene of musical euphoria worthy of Sunday Baptists as a drum-crazed congregation belts out "Oel Yavo Shalom Aleinu." The cantors, all curly haired women in vaguely biblical white vestments, hold their arms outstretched in a gesture of open religious ecstasy that is not the usual mode of modern Jewry. The vibe owes much thanks to musical director and self-styled "ritual creatrix" Shulamit Wise Fairman, who has been with the synagogue since 2005 and serves as lead lady in white vestments with arms and voice outstretched. But Kehilla's true musical signature is the powerful drumming, courtesy of Debbie Fier, a percussionist specializing in tambel, djembe and conga. Fier sums up her philosophy on her web site, "Around the world, music brings people and communities together and I see myself as part of that joyful work."

BEST ART HOUSE COFFEE SHOP

cafe (504)

504 Wesley Ave Oakland. 510-922-8705. Cafe504.com

This cozy Lake Merritt coffee shop boasts Ritual and Blue Bottle beans — not to mention engaging art and an unmistakable community vibe. You might have to fight for a spot in this quiet, postage-stamp hideaway, but parking is easy and the tables are expansive. The cafe offers new beans monthly. You'll have your pick of seasonal espresso blends, a slew of single-origin French press options, or a mug of drip brewed just for you. The owner, who lives on an urban farm in Oakland, stresses high-quality, natural ingredients. When you reach for dairy to pour into your brew, you'll find a petite glass bottle of Straus Family cream. Vegan coffee fiends will appreciate that soy milk incurs no extra cost. Prather Ranch meats and Veritable Vegetable veggies accompany freshly-baked goodies you won't easily resist. On one recent day, diners had their choice of mozzarella-chive quiche, oat-crusted zucchini or pecan-crusted brie sandwich to be washed down with Meyer-lemon mint-cinnamon soda. And, yes, free wi fi seekers won't be disappointed. The shop sits just east of Lake Merritt, minutes from Highway 580 — if you're not lucky enough to live nearby.

BEST MUSEUM

Oakland Museum of California

1000 Oak St., Oakland. 510-238-2200. MuseumCA.org

It is a cliché, but the Oakland Museum of California really is one of the East Bay's best kept secrets. From the Day of the Dead exhibit featuring a jet black low-rider convertible decorated with Pseudo skeletons, to a recent mind bending *LA Point* show featuring Robert Williams' Rat Fink inspired lowbrow surrealism, the museum has more than a little bit of weirdness for everyone. May the artists with natural-history huffs who flocked to see Bob Walker's gorgeous photographs of East Bay Regional Park system and the result is a mashup of the sun starved and sunburned hikers who should be afraid of skin cancer. The museum is in the midst of a massive upgrade, but don't let construction work stop you. Two very different exhibits are fun attention until late August. Squeak Carnwath's emblematic images of rabbits, hats, and numbers should tickle the subconscious, and *The African Presence in Mexico* details how Africans a tiny portion of the colonial population "enriched Mexican culture through art, music, language, cuisine, and dance." Don't forget the First Friday events, either; they feature music parties, and other fun the first Friday of every month.

RICHARD AVEDON

Photographs 1946–2004

July 11–November 29



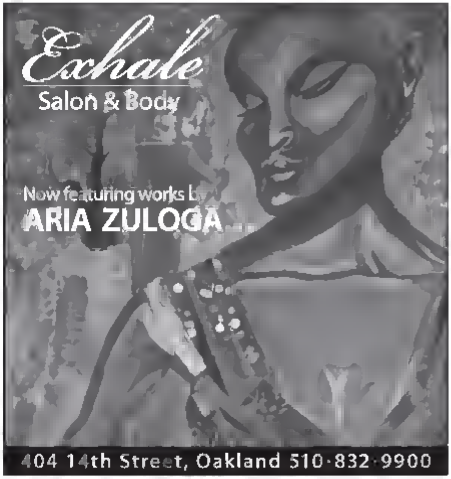
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Richard Avedon: Photographs 1946–2004 is organized by The Los Angeles Museum of Modern Art, Denver Art Museum, and The Art Institute of Chicago in cooperation with The Richard Avedon Foundation. The San Francisco presentation is made possible by generous support from The Bernard Osher Foundation, Nion McEvoy, Credit Suisse, and Paul and Anne Watts.



earthdance

September 25/26/27th

Black Oak Ranch, Hwy 101, Laytonville, Northern California.

STS9, IndiaArie, Galactic, Balkan Beat Box, Lyrics Born, Sly and Robbie (feat. Taylor Anderson & Special Guests), BLVD, The Devil Makes Three, Pnuma Trio

Fort Knox Five (live), Eots, Crown City Rockers, Goddess Alchemy Project, Albino Blue Turtle Seduction, Moonalice, Trillium Green, Lynx and Jenaver, Wisdom, Dr Israel, Mighty Dub Killaz (live), Karsh Kale (live), March Fourth Marching Band

Tab Sun and Smiley Calhoun, Lula Taylor Hermaphie, Le Cara, Sambadu, Tina Malia, Fennah Ft Allah Uweli Ensemble, Sasha Rose, Big Gigantic, Underground Orchestra, Ganga Giri, Boombox, On The One, Delhi 2 Dublin, Luminaries, 7 Club, Jeff Jones Band, Cypherium Collective, A Tribe Unfolds, Hiose Lyon Urban Nature, Shiela B, Desert Dwellers, Radio Dept, Kirtan with Prema Mayi and Friends, Ilka D'Alva, Jonah La Fiura, Electric Buddha, Manifest Anti-Hero, Comedy Show Hosted By Wavy Gravy and Special Guests.

THE TEMPLE OF ELECTRONICA WITH:

Om, Bassnectar (live band), Random Rab, Ana Bia, Otnaio 1000, J Boogie, Michaelangelo, DJ Vaalian, Third Eye Tribe, Kanvasonic, Beatfreakers, Intentional Observer, Dragonfly, CD, Dylan, Sunlawn, Change U, Drum Spyder, Alex Theory, Iric Dub Mafia.

Special festival event: Global Prayer for Peace link up (4pm Sat) Uniting Over 300 Locations in 60 Countries. Global Wisdom Council featuring indigenous elders from many nations.

3 Day camp our celebration by world peace and unity only set amidst a beautiful old growth oak forest with 5 stages and over 70 acts. Highlights include Kabuki Alley, late night dinner, organic food, theater and performing arts, and much more...

3 Day Ticket Includes Camping
Presale $195.00 At the Gate $200.00 Sunday Only $130.00

Info and Ticket outlets: www.earthdancelive.com Festival office: 541-488-5468

No pets, no open fires.

READERS SAY THE DARNDEST THINGS

BEST CHURCH MUSIC

Chochmat HaLev

You can't beat get-up-and-dance Shabbot service at 8 and Friday nights! — *Kerrick*

The church you hear outside San Pablo Park on Sundays

Makes sports fun. — *John*

East Bay Church of Religious Science

Positive, progressive, accepting, and gospel style — clap your hands, while donning big smiles and warmth, friendly people. — *Michelle Lane*

Hub?

— *Adam Beck*

St. Columba Church in Oakland

The wonderful liturgical music styling of Raven Harlow make this an amazing experience. His blend of Southern Gospel with Catholic hymns is brilliant. — *Jeff St. Clair*

BEST CLUB

?? in Oakland?? you've got to be kidding

— *Kelly D*

Mua

Funky, fresh, and amazing drinks! — *Camille Gobert*

Stork Club

That's my life. — *Peter St. Laurenne*

Uptown

Coolest bar — the actual wood piece that drinks are sliced upon. Formerly at the Old Spaghetti Factory in Jack London Square. — *Brent Durning*

BEST CONCERT VENUE

Fox Theater

Phil, Chunks. — *MacAllistair*

Beautiful. Just the sound needs improvement. — *Ken*

Freight and Salvage

Except for the chairs. — *Jimmy Hedland*

Cheeseboard pizza collective

Price of a piece of pizza = you get to hear the INCREDIBLE California Hourglass live band. — *Alice Armstrong*

Roosters Roadhouse

Best underground metal scene. — *Michelle*

BEST INTERSECTION OF ART, POLITICS, AND POWERPOINT

Pecha Kucha at EastSide Cultural Council

2277 International Blvd Oakland, 510-533-9629, EastSideArtsAlliance.com

Shortly after its 2003 inception in Tokyo, the Pecha Kucha party format caught on through out Asia, then bubbled up in European and American hipster scenes. It's a simple, creative idea: A group of artists (eight to fourteen, ideally) present twenty slides of their work for twenty seconds apiece. Originally designed as a forum for Japanese architects to showcase their portfolios, it's a useful format for business meetings, lectures, or any person wanting to present a wide range of material in a compressed time slot. Oakland's iteration of the party naturally has its own spirit. Organizers Weyland Southon (of Hard Knock Radio fame) Maisha Quint (of EastSide Arts Alliance) and Estiya Myashiro (Samurai Graphix) seek out artists who work in a variety of media and produce socially relevant, politically inspired material. Since launching the party last October, they've featured a wide range of local notables, from graffiti mural ist Suzie Lundy to hydroponic gardener Eric Mauroda to "thrift couture" experts from the women-owned company Conscious Fashionistas. Each party has an overarching theme (e.g., "new," "love" or "good/green/earth"), and participants are given lots of latitude in how they interpret it. "New" included "new-wave cooking" demonstrations by Oakland chef Bryant Terry, while "love" featured a presentation on "home thug love" by queer Filipino artist Joel Tan. In contrast to other Pecha Kuchas Oakland emphasizes art and politics over entrepreneurship. It's clearly one of a kind. The party happens every other month on second Fridays.

BEST SPACE FOR THE BUDDING ARTIST

The Museum of Children's Art

538 9th St., Ste. 210 Oakland 510-465-8770 MOCHA.org

MOCHA is an art haven for kids and harried parents. Families can come in a drop-in basis at $7 a pop and stay all day, or join as members and get free drop-in all year. There's always something to spark the inner artist, whether it's a big blob of homemade play dough or blank canvases (okay, just sheets of paper) on the painting wall. Plus, there are rotating arts and crafts like hatmaking or printmaking using salad spinners. The best part? Parents don't have to worry about setup — or cleanup. For the wary kids, there are bins of toys to keep them busy or a playhouse, with play food, until they decide to pick up that paintbrush. The center recently celebrated its twenty-year birthday with a big outdoor bash. The staff is nice and its location is also convenient, close to the 12th Street/Downtown Oakland BART station.

BEST THEATRICAL PRODUCTION

The Lieutenant of Inishmore, Berkeley Repertory Theatre

2025 Addison St., Berkeley, 510-647-2949, BerkeleyRep.org

"Production" is the key word here. Martin McDonagh's pitch black 2001 comedy about how a dead cat belonging to an Irish splinter group terrorist leads inevitably to a bloodbath

may seem like light entertainment compared to his deeply creepy *Pillowman*, which played Berkeley Rep in 2007 but the exception of *The Lieutenant of Inishmore* this April and May was nothing short of jaw-dropping. Director Les Waters (who also staged *Pillowman*) and his cast, designers, and crew did an amazing job with the hefty challenges of tech, timing, and tone that the play presents: thick Irish dialect, more than thirty gallons of blood flowing in each performance, incredibly realistic gunshots and blood spatters, an actor performing an entire scene while hanging from his feet. His grisly death and ensuing body parts and most of all, making the whole thing funny. It would have been easy for the farcical elements to get drowned in the gore, but instead Waters and company managed to make this bloody concoction not just palatable but delicious.

BEST LARGE THEATER COMPANY

Aurora Theatre Company

2081 Addison St., Berkeley, 510-843-4822.
AuroraTheatre.org

There's some stiff competition in this category, with the larger Berkeley Rep and Cal Shakes doing some excellent work, but after a couple years of so-so scripts, Aurora's new dedication to a particularly strong season, especially when it comes to casting. The didactic elements of Gore Vidal's *The Best Man* and George Packer's *Betrayed* were outweighed by terrific performances, and new Bob Glaudini's generally pleasing rom-com *Jack Goes Boating* is made effervescent by Joy Carlin's lively singing and sunny phenomenal acting. Add to that some particularly solid work with hundred-year-old lure between Barbara Oliver's savvy production of Shaw's *The Devil's Disciple* and Mark Jackson's spellbinding staging of the problematic Strindberg classic *Miss Julie*, and the season that closes this week merits a hearty round of applause. Next season promises to be chock full of highly literate social commentary, starting in August with Clifford Odets' Depression drama *Awake and Sing!* then tackling the much more recent lure of Neil Labute's 2004 *Fat Pig*, the Ted Drake Johnson world premiere *The First Grade*, and Stephen Karam's 2007 comedy *Speech & Debate*, plus a new version of Ibsen's *John Gabriel Borkman*. Consider our appetites whet for the feast to come.

BEST SMALL THEATER COMPANY

Shotgun Players

1901 Ashby Ave., Berkeley, 510-841-6500.
ShotgunPlayers.org

Depending on the stage setup for any given show, Shotgun isn't that much smaller than the Aurora: it's also got its own space, and it's just about as old. But operating on a smaller budget and returning its scrappy spirit of its long nomadic years, Shotgun remains distinguished by an eclectic and ambitious mix of selections that the company pulls off remarkably well. Last year brought South Berkeley intriguing takes on Shaw and Shakespeare (the odd semi-historical musical *Vera Wilde* and the raucous and challenging original adaptations *Ubu for President* and *Beowulf: A Thousand Years of Baggage*). Only two shows into its 2009 season, Shotgun has already talk



Chris Ruffey

as the heady stuff of David Hare's drama *Skylight* and Mark Jackson's sparkling adaptation of Goethe's *Faust* and goes on thinking big with the upcoming world premieres at Jen Tracy's *Aunnel Farm* adaptation *The Farm* and Marcus Gardley's Rosie the Riveter musical *This World* in a *Women's Hands* and a season-closing production of Brecht's *The Threepenny Opera*. The only thing better than Shotgun Players intrepid attitude, of always trying new things is seeing how well they pull them off.

BEST ACTOR

James Carpenter

CalShakes--JimeRichardBlog.blogspot.com

Besides creating fully believable and affecting characters which in itself is no mean feat, James Carpenter can make you look at plays and speeches you might have seen a dozen times anew, as if it were the first time. It's been a gift for East Bay audiences to see him play both young Hal and old Henry in Cal Shakes' *Henry IV* productions two decades apart. This spring saw him as dim wit Ted Denny in Berkeley Rep's *The Lieutenant of Inishmore* trying to paint a cat so that his psychiatrist son doesn't find out his pet is dead, and last year he gave a terrific turns as the ailing professor in Cal Shakes' *Uncle Vanya*, scheming Ricardetto in *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* and crotchety Scrooge in *A Christmas Carol* at ACT. His single scene as the dying king in Cal Shakes' 2007 *Richard III* was easily the best thing in that production and his portrayal of Capulet's grief over his daughter's death had tremendous depth to last month's *Romeo and Juliet* on that same stage. Sure, the plays the thing, but to make the play all about one minor character's tragedy for one fleeting moment is a real art.

BEST DIRECTOR

Mark Jackson

ArtStreetTheatre.org

Writer-director Mark Jackson has had a heck of a run lately. Already this year he's returned twice to Shotgun Players, for whom he did the acclaimed *The Death of Meyerhold* in 2004. The year began with his fashionista take on *Macbeth*, in which actors continually struck poses like runway models, and he recently finished co-directing and starring in *Faust Part One*, his adaptation of Goethe's immense and near-unstageable play at the same name, in which the first half hour consists entirely of Faust facing the audience and holding forth on his philosophical dilemma before it gets to the soul-selling and doomed romance. Between those dark and diabolical undertakings, he staged a slim

READERS SAY THE DARNDEST THINGS

BEST DANCE CLUB

Ali Mighty

Ali Mighty is the joint we all should experience at least once, with its b-boys and b-girls battling it out juxtaposed next to all the beautiful people shaking what their mother gave them. — *Maurice Lyles*

Oasis

At least until they went under due to City of Oakland permit troubles! — *Anon*

White Horse

Best mix of people of all races, ages and sexual expressions. — *Lisa Harbus*

BEST EVENT

Chapel of the Chimes — Summer Solstice concert

Experimental music in a mausoleum on an intense solstice ... eerie and amazing. — *Patricia Wakida*

Election night 2008

— *Grayson Coffee*

First Friday Fellini

It's a monthly community-supported lovefeast variety show. Nothing beats NPR with boobies! — *Margaret France*

Maker Faire

Some of the best creativity the Bay Area has to offer — and flaming metal death on a stick. — *J. Cross Bolt*

BEST FESTIVAL

California Coastal Cleanup Day

Do good, have fun for our bay and oceans. — *Eli Saddler*

Fire Arts Festival

How can you not love things made with fire? — *Adam Tejada*

The Outer Lands

Whatever the concert is called. — *Keum Mineur*





READERS SAY THE DARNDEST THINGS

BEST MUSEUM
Oakland Museum
Wiggle your toes and the tourmouth koi will nip them. — *Shirley Dvorin*

Makes you proud to be a Californian — *Claudia Perkins*

BEST MUSICIAN
Gary Hegedis
The cool player for Stella Mara. He's awesome. — *John C. Sulak*

Sons V Baker
His Supreme 60's show off not only his skills as a composer & performer, but also his heart & originality! All while a hippin urthost! — *Lo Manila*

BEST NEW CULTURE SCENE
Burlesque
It should be lost old culture scene — *Margaret France*

Hyphy-Norteño aka Corrido-Hyphy
Haven't heard of it? Check it out. — *Cornilia Landini*

First Friday Art Murmur
Live bands and weird art. — *Vanessa Starks*

Uptown
Assuming good bar drinks count as culture. — *Susan Taffonte*

BEST PAINTER
Tyrell Collins
Lovely surreal oils on brushed metal canvases in her West Oakland studio — a great place to check out during East Bay Open Studios! — *Mirely*

BEST PERFORMER
Sunkar Lee
Beatboxing juggler, hoopworker, heartbreaker. — *Margaret France*

Honey Lawless
Her burlesque performances are like no other. Perfect and utter madness. — *Maggie*

lurly bloody but revelatory fresh and pitch-perfect production of Strindberg's *Miss Julie* for Aurora Theatre that made the script's troublesome misogyny and all-around misanthropy feel wholly true to the psychology of the characters. With a strong emphasis on stylized movement and the kind of stage pictures he wants to create, Jackson likes to have dodge elements in place on day one of rehearsal and plunge right into blocking and choreography rather than leaving them for later, and it pays off in seemingly seamless integration of word and action.

BEST NEW FILM DIRECTOR

Cary Fukunaga

After Oakland native Cary Joji Fukunaga graduated from UC Santa Cruz and went to NYU film school, he made a living as a cameraman and production tech on various indie projects and eventually co-wrote and directed *Victoria para chino*, a narrative short about illegal immigrants being trucked across the Mexico-Texas border. That film won him a carload of awards on the film festival circuit — and no doubt the chance to make *Sin Nombre*, a feature-length elaboration on the same subject that happens to be one of the most striking releases of 2009. All of a sudden, the 32-year-old filmmaker is hot as a tin pie plate in a sunny parking lot, inking movie deals with Focus Features, Universal, etc., according to IMDb.com. NYU and Sundance are probably going to take the credit for Fukunaga's success, but we suspect the smoldering sizzle of *Sin Nombre* is just the Oaklandish him coming out.

BEST LOCAL PORTRAIT OF INDIE FILM ANGST

Frazer Bradshaw

FrazerBradshaw.com

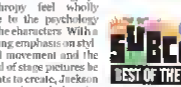
Only someone who really knows the turf could capture the essential sun-splashed hopelessness of the North Oakland working-class flatlands the way Frazer Bradshaw's film *Everything Strange and New* does. East Bay resident Bradshaw's slower-than-slow character study is anything but "leisurely paced." In fact it's quite hectic, in a numbed way, in chronicling the ups and downs — mostly downs — of a journeyman carpenter named Wayne (played by actor Jerry McDaniel) as he unsteadily negotiates his life on the job and at home, with the wife and kids. Bradshaw, a veteran indie cinematographer wrote, directed, and shot the 2004 production on location. You'll recognize the streets and you'll recognize Wayne, if only as a type — everyone knows someone like him. *Everything Strange and New* played the San Francisco International Film Festival last April.

BEST ART GALLERY

Johansson Projects

2300 Telegraph Ave., Oakland, 510-444-9140, JohanssonProjects.com

Art Murmur regulars may already be familiar with this small hip gallery located at the corner of 23rd Street and Telegraph Avenue, right at the center of First Friday festivities but gallerygoers interested in seeing well-crafted and ingenious contemporary art when the crowds are no longer troublesome should add it to their diurnal art itineraries. The two- or three-person exhibitions here are of high quality and are aesthetically consistent to a surprising degree. While the gallery's long, arcaded space may remind you a little of Romanesque church architecture, the four-gross ruling by Masako Inaoka the reeveled eggshaded-bark floor, not the variously lyrical or ironic artworks by local and international artists Jim Campbell, Nathan Carder, Jill Gallenstein, Amanda Hughes, Lawrence LaBianca, Kristin Lewis, Tadashi



Murrayama, Jen Stark, and Katy Stone, among others, will cause any incipient feelings of High Church of Art intimidation — as will the titles of the shows, which are often as strange and humorous as the artwork hanging on the walls or from the ceiling, or scuttling across the floors or around corners.

BEST NEW ART GALLERY

Slate Art & Design

4770 Telegraph Ave Oakland 510-652-6085
SlateArtandDesign.com

A recent arrival to Temescal, the Slate Gallery brings a refined sensibility to the uninhibited creative ferment of the Oakland art scene, and no wonder: Owner Danielle Fox worked at Sotheby's in London and runs an interior design firm as well as the gallery, which exhibits paintings, prints, photographs, mixed-media works, and sculpture by emerging and mid-career artists. Fox seeks "elegant work that balances beauty and sensuality with a strong formal interest, clear sense of focus, and restraint." Past shows have featured Caroline Seckinger's deconstructions of traditional feminine roles in drawings, photographs, prints, and sculpture, and Michele Hotherr's Thru and Frost series of dramatically lighted black-and-white lineal photographs. The current show, entitled Imaginary Landscapes, features Jessica Marion's painterly/collagistic paintings and her organism/machine sculptures both 2-D and 3-D works are synthases of real and imagined elements and other polarities according to Merrin "nature and industry, past and present microscopic details and vast landscapes."

BEST PURVEYOR OF LOCAL CRAFTS

FiveTen Studio

801 Broadway Oakland 510-316-3200
FiveTenStudio.blogspot.com

Custom-designed studio components made from recycled or scavenged furniture hard woods may sound pretty costume and out of step with truth-to-materials industrial design principles, but the high-end turntables and other components made by Audiowood's Joel Scilley on display at Alfonse Dominguez's and Sean Matthews' FiveTen Studio gallery/store dedicated to the work of local designers, may stimulate a certain techno-lust in the savage male breast that is not normally fluted on LP paraphernalia. You have been forewarned. The organic forms of redwood burl juxtapose nicely with the polished components of walnut oak, ebony, artichoke germ brass, and copper — and the bonsai mini and platters by Kega Origin Live, or Terra and speakers by Audioengine. The exposed mechanicals become part of the "performance art" furniture-sculpture — artifacts that "sound great, that work well, and that enhance musical experiences with their shoe-luteh unique character" to quote Scilley. Also on display: artists books and limited-edition furniture.

BEST NEW ART WALK

Golden Gate Gallery District

San Pablo Ave Berkeley

The galleries along San Pablo Avenue that have participated in First Friday for several years have not exactly seceded, Texas-style, from that event instead, they've opened a new front in art district, named after the traditional moniker for the triangle where Oakland Berkeley and Emeryville converge. Blankspace and the Compound Gallery on San Pablo are already familiar to Generation X and Y boulevardiers somewhat less so, undeservedly are the nearby Persnepe Cellars Forthrite Printing, and John F Kennedy University art gallery. All will be open First Fridays from 6 to 9 p m Adding new texture to the area's hale in stitute's brand new 2,000-square-foot gallery on the ground floor of the old Heinz factory just downstairs from JFKU scheduled events include artist talks and Thank God It's Thursday wine-and-art nights. Pick up postcards with addresses and hours at any of the participating venues.

BEST ART BLOG

Artopic org

While we're all fortunate to have the Internet as a medium of communication and community-building, emerging artists particularly benefit. They can now get serious (or casual) public feedback about their work relatively easily which was impossible in the bad old days when a few lofty tenured critics were accorded semidivine powers. Today, the tech-savvy Bay Area (thanks with online activity with a variety of web sites furnishing calendar listings (ArtSlant), art sociology and anthropology...plus pinky-cam pix (ArtBusiness) and analysis at whatever degree of difficulty you want (Shot gun-Review Stretcher) The East Bay art scene benefits from a number of active, ubiquitous blogger-artists, including Theo Konrad Auer John Casey, Narangkar Glover Obi Kaufmann and Derek Weinberg, all worth following. Steven Sarch's Artopic, however seems to strike the best balance between coverage analysis, and dialogue with solid writing from a number of contributors plus links to other useful blogs and web sites. No need to choose of course Remember Arnsoni's "Smarty Bob" scramble? All you can eat 24/7 on demand.

BEST GRAFFITI ARTIST

Estria Miyashiro

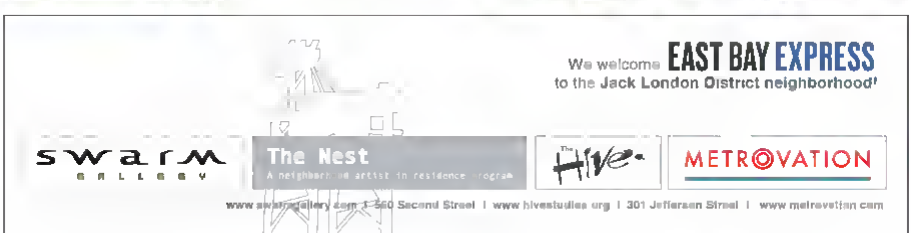
Estria.net

It's not a vast hyperbole to say that in the summers of 1985 and 1986, Estria Miyashiro graffitied all over his hometown of Honolulu Hawaii And it wasn't wack stuff either solid hip-hop historian Jeff Chang, who attended Iolani High School with Miyashiro and once organized a student graffiti exhibition. Even as a teenager Miyashiro was known for an in-your-face quality electrolyte kinetic. He was part of a renaissance that ultimately migrated to the East Bay where Miyashiro hooked up with such famed writers as the late Mike Dreams Dane, and Vague Today, he paints murals with kids from East Oakland as part of Visual Element, the free mural workshop that Miyashiro co-founded with EastSide Arts Alliance. He's illustrated the Fruitvale tram tracks, the Oakland Museum of California, the stage backdrops of Malcolm X Jazz Arts Festival and walls throughout East Oakland. He painted a









READERS SAY THE DARNDEST THINGS

BEST PHOTOGRAPHER

Jason Montano

His pictures are all local that expresses the soul of the Bay Area. — Fred Montano

Jennifer Waicukauski

Best pinhole photos I have ever seen. — Jen Frost

Richard Misrach

He captures the true spirit of the West with his eye and his political conscience. — Lisa Horton

BEST PURVEYOR OF LOCAL CRAFTS

5733

All products are handmade locally, with local fare, environmentally safe dyes and methods. And the stuff is free from awesome. — Mal Nguyen

ACCI

50 yrs of cooperational Gallery/store — still going strong! — Hannah Jo

Afterglow

I can't afford most of their items but they're gorgeous and handmade! — Alexis Rabagan

Art in the Park (Alameda)

100 percent local (so local it was canceled last year). — John

Metro Lighting

Super cool handmade fixtures and blown glass! — Christo

Rock Paper Scissors

Unisex panties! — Vanessa Brooks

BEST SCULPTOR

J.B. Lowe

Creamy, well-constructed objects that evoke magical stories. — Christo

Richard Akers

His sculptures tower up to seven feet in the air. Sociological stalagmites, as he calls them, are an assemblage of cultural icons relating to the post 911 world. — Mike Paramuchuk

BEST SINGER OR MC

Too Short

The best experience of my life in the East Bay occured when I saw Too Short emerging from the Oakland Grill. I asked him to "blow the Whistle" and he obliged by giving me the power fist. Awesome. — April de Castro

Lucha Libre wrestler on a wall in Mexico City during a rainstorm. Hr helped create a large "Move Against AIDS" piece for AIDS Walk San Francisco in 2004. His murals combine painterly techniques with an airbrush aesthetic as the detailing is photo-real. Aside from his city beautification projects, Miyashiro runs the San Leandro company Samurai Graphix, which creates stencils of Malcolm X, Frida Kahlo and Mumia Abu Jamal, often for nonprofit organizations or other worthy causes. Talent alone distinguishes Miyashiro from other graffiti artists. What's more important though is that he's used that talent to do right by his community.

BEST PAINTER

Margaret Chavigny

MargaretChavigny.com

Considering the art world's current stylistic chaos and our deep bench of local talent jockeying for invertias can be an exercise in hair pulling (and hairsplitting). It's also an opportunity to showcase deserving talent. The opulent abstract paintings of Margaret Chavigny are neither robbed in excess nor extreme in their choice of materials. Her synthesis "order and chaos, intention and chance, knowing and not knowing" derives from abstract expressionism, while the exploration of memory and meditation through the layering of collage, acrylic encaustic, and oil paint draws from the traditional art materials ornamentation (melody here) Chavigny draws on an eclectic range of imagery (calligraphy and yogic motifs, among others) but she integrates the symbols into an overall pattern or overlay of patterns. The paintings' complex beauty and compelling visual authority draw the viewer in mysterious and poetic mergers of formalism and intuition they sustain prolonged looking.

BEST PHOTOGRAPHER

Mark Read

1440 Sternage Ave Berkeley, 510-526-8980, MarkReadPhotography.com

The photos of Mark Read trace their documentarian roots, capture the lives of people in faraway places like Sierra Leone, Lapland, Togo Zimbabwe Niger and even untouristed corners of Great Britain. But the familiar aesthetic gets a fresh look in these pictures, which are strongly composed and visually striking, often packing an emotional punch as well. A young Mongol mother and child ("Journey of Man") a victim of war or disease ("Sierra Leone: A Fragile Peace") and hopeful woman and children ("Cambodia: I Have A Story to Tell") look into the portraitist's camera with dignity or delight. In other works we see reindeer milling in a holding pen or browsing on a vast steppe ("Lapland: The Parting of the Herd") corrugated shanties ("Togo: Child Trafficking") or, on a lighter note, English Elvis impersonators talking shop, or stills from a nonexistent spinoff movie based on Fargo ("This Is A True Story") Read's landscape photos are also captivating, though different in their aesthetic philosophy and probably digitally enhanced.



Best sculptor: Michael Meyers — Chris Duffey

BEST SCULPTOR

Michael Meyers

StudioMichaelMeyers.com

The conceptual sculptures and installations of Michael Meyers have been interpreted as following minimalist practice — operating on the viewer phenomenologically, directly through the eyes and brain and nervous system, rather than metaphorically, through literary or real-world associations. (Think of Bacon's disfigured nude miniatures that cannot be conveyed by paint only, rather than by narrative.) Meyers' works appear equally involved with process and idea, and with our associations with the results of those processes. His background in theater design only adds to the ambiguity, since props and sets can take on psychological import. Whatever your stance on artistic "theatricality," Meyers' meticulously crafted works of wood, Hydrocal vellum and hardware with their eccentric or impossible megaphones, telescopes, bells and pulleys, are intriguing mechanisms that excite, for all the complex engineering involved in their creation a paradoxical air of gentility: their curious faux nostalgia suggests Steampunk and other tempting alternate universes.

BEST DIGITAL ARTIST

JC Garrett

JCGarrettArt.com

Digital art has come a long way since the era of chrome women, endless tiled planes, and floating polygons, but it still often looks both hyperreal and unreal like the bodiless CGI in movies, silicon-based eye candy rather than carbon-based self-expression. This is decidedly not the case with JC Garrett's satirical prints, which far from exulting in their state-of-the-art computational muscle, have instead a retro pre-computer look that recalls the zippy, montage-based commercial styles of the 1960s. While the artist employs some photographic imagery, he draws most of it with a mouse, bringing a traditional artistic subjectivity and gesture into these mash ups of politics, sex, commerce and war. In "Candidate 2007," a colossal Hillary head rests atop media logos, awaiting the cranes that will hoist it into position. "Fractured Fairy Tales" is Garrett's self-portrait composed of eight separate images, almost like those old TV ads with the pounding hammer, untened rope and sparking electrodes denoting headache pain — the floating world of our mediasphere and mindscape.

BEST STRATEGISTS FOR SOULFUL VEGANS

Vegan Soul Kitchen by Bryant Terry

As an NYU grad student committed to social issues, Bryant Terry also was devoted to food. How to combine the two? By becoming an eco-chef saving the Earth, and feeding its people — and teaching them to feed themselves

well. In 2002 he founded b-healthy!, a project aimed at helping young Americans foster sustainable food systems. The following year, invited to contribute a recipe to an anthology, Terry wanted his creation to have "the texture of an autobiography." So he "dug deep to come up with a dish that had some Memphis Soul (my past) mixed with Brooklyn Boom Bap (my present) finished off with a squeeze of Oakland Free-Range Funk (my soon-to-be future)." The result was a "bright, bold, and sexy ... modern and chic" collard green "confetti" with olive oil, orange juice, and raisins. This inspired a book of his own this year's *Vegan Soul Kitchen*. "I do realize that veganism — the avoidance of meat, poultry, seafood, eggs, dairy products and honey — is antithetical to the way that African American and Southern cooking has been constructed in the popular imagination over the last four decades," Terry admits. But his Coconut Ginger Creamed Corn, Red Beans with Simmered Seitan Pan-Fried Grit Cakes with Caramelized Spring Onions and Bundred plus other recipes make a strong case for forgetting bacon



when it's a good idea to fine-tune yourself toward physical/financial/occupational/marital/parental/spiritual betterment and when to just embrace your flaws and get on with it. Beth Lisick, a long-standing pillar of the San Francisco literary scene who lives in Berkeley, is here to help. She spent a year wading through reams of self-help literature so we don't have to. She flew to seminars, including a Cruise to Lose cruise with Richard Simmons, fished morsels of good advice from scores of self-help chaff and grafted them onto a funny memoir of her year-long effort to become a better person. She does improve, but she remains endearingly approachably imperfect. She fumbles through the platitudes, non-sequiturs, and mind-changing insight of self-help experts, honing her ability to know when to keep her skepticism in check and when to let it rip, providing an invaluable resource for lazy people who are too cool to seek self-improvement programs but who could use a leg up in the personal-growth department.

BEST BOOK ON AN UNSOLVED EAST BAY MURDER

Lust to Kill by Robert Scott

At her 19th birthday party, A-student and gifted musician Jenny Lin "laughed as she received a troll doll, among other gifts," Robert Scott writes in his latest true-crime page-turner, *Lust to Kill: A Twisted Misfit's Murderous Frenzy*. The party was recorded on videotape at the Lin family's Castro Valley home. Two days later, Jenny's father entered that home to find his daughter slain. At her funeral, "stuffed animals and her viola lay in her coffin beside her — the same viola she had been playing since she was three years old." Sadly, the case went cold. But Oregon detectives are now investigating a possible suspect convicted killer Sebastian Shaw, who slew other victims in similar ways at around the same time. Evidence against Shaw is piling up, including boasts he made to a cellmate as well as his resemblance to a man whom a neighbor spotted lurking near the Lin home on the day of the murder. The book examines Shaw's whole life — born Chau Quong Ho, he was among the last Vietnamese to be helicoptered to safety during the fall of Saigon — and heinous crimes. Scott, who lives in Orinda and devotes the book's final chapter to the Lin case, hopes the investigation can someday find justice for Jenny's family

BEST EAST BAY BOOK

Helping Me Help Myself: One Skeptic, Ten Self-Help Gurus, and a Year on the Brink of the Comfort Zone by Beth Lisick

Ever since the overachievement set went mainstream, it's been hard to figure out

READERS SAY THE DARNDEST THINGS

BEST THEATRICAL PRODUCTION

1001 Arabian Nights @ Berkeley Rep
Many Zimmerman is amazing, always. — *Thony Tingle*

Beach Blanket Babylon
Hilarious, always fresh and relevant. — *Mojahn Kanesshiro*

Dracula: Prince of Fire at the Crucible
Fantastic multimedia extravaganza. And fun! — *Dunn*

Faust at Ashby Stage
Absolutely brilliant. I hope this one sees many revivals. Faust done with a simple sets, a set one, a hours and performers. — *Steven Schwartz*

Weldon School upper group play — every year!
Russell Wright, the drama teacher at Weldon is amazing and puts the kids on, the most awesome work. — *Chrissy*

BEST WAREHOUSE PARTIES

Andy Warhol Factory Party
I saw a guy get off pulling off the wall. I schtick and I nearly peed my pants. — *Little Lisa Chavez*

Not the Armadillo/Whamilo Factory
Talk about facebounty orgasm. — *East Bay Boy Balls*

Your Mother's
When you print it puts them above ground hence they'll most likely get shut down this year. Don't help cause not" anymore. Like you helped fill the other warehouses.) — *Writes Stuff*





Best dance party at which to wear armskin: Louisiana music at Eagle Hall

Chris Ruffey

BEST BOOKS FOR SELF-HELPERS

New Harbinger Publications

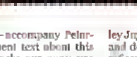
NewHarbingerPub.com

Need help? Founded in 1973 by psychologist Matt McKay and writer Patrick Fanning, Oakland-based New Harbinger began publishing right out of the gate the kind of self-help books that have since become the industry standard: inspiring, encouraging, reader-friendly tool kits packed with practical skill-building lessons and tips on personal growth, relationships, self-esteem, parenting, childhood development, stress management, mental health and every other pitfall-fraught aspect of human life. Volumes such as *The Depression Sobriety Workbook* and *Thin Pregnancy* and *Postpartum Anxiety Workbook* aren't just wishful thinking; they're made to be used. And because this is the East Bay, some New Harbinger books double as self-help and neo-Judeo-Christian spiritual guides: In *The Untethered Soul*, Michael A. Singer invokes the Tao and yoga while advocating "unconditional happiness," a radical refusal to fool sad. Branching out into the instructional memoir genre last year, New Harbinger had a hit with UC Berkeley undergrad Blake Taylor's *ADHD & Me*. Providing a rare look at this common condition from the inside out, the young author detailed his past adventures and disasters — from launching rockets into a neighbor's pool to setting his mother's kitchen afire with eyeglass-cleaning fluid! — while offering hope and, of course, advice.

BEST ANIMAL LOVER'S CALL TO (BIOLOGICAL) ARMS

Elephant Reflections by Karl Ammann and Dale Peterson

Swiss-born Benesh Award winning wildlife photographer Karl Ammann began his career by snapping African cheetahs than great tigers. His admiration for the latter — and his horror at how many are slaughtered and sold for food — inspired Ammann to join forces with celebrated conservation writer Dale Peterson. Berkeley-based UC Press published their harrowing 2005 book *Eating Apes* as well as their latest collaboration *Elephant Reflections* which is hands down one of this year's most moving and beautiful volumes. Ammann's bold photographs of African elephants in the wild — tusks, trunks, tails, and those all-knowing eyes — accompany Peterson's impassioned, eloquent text about this "creature who quietly seeks our puny size and fruitful chatter ... and who should indeed caution us, till us to be careful, keep still, have respect." For zoophiles and conservationists it's a hefty, handsome coffee-table confection, but it's also much more than that. Ammann's pictures serve as what we might lose, alongside Peterson's revelations about poaching and politics. Smoked elephant meat is a key part of the Central African Republic's economy, for instance. Zimbabwe's government regularly slaughters hundreds of elephants for feasts — and exchanges planeloads of ivory for Chinese guns and ammunition.



BEST KANJI CRASH COURSE

Crazy for Kanji by Eve Kushner

Impassioned *otaku* eager to devour their beloved *manga* in the original *Nihongo* have a friend in Eve Kushner. Although the Berkeley-Japanophile adores every last downstroke and dot, she warns that studying these magnificent characters "can also bring one close to insanity." She should know. Published this year by Berkeley's Stone Bridge Press, her latest book, *Crazy for Kanji*, is funny as well as educational, offering hundreds of games, lessons, and believe-it-or-nots, such as a chart decoding the characters that create famous brand names. For example, the two kanji making up the word "Mitsubishi" mean "three" and "rhombus." (The car company's logo features three rhombi.) Kushner explains her attraction to the topic: "The child in us longs to decode ... Teasing out the tangles in kanji provides endless entertainment as well as thrilling epiphanies." Her book brilliantly merges this contemporary — sure to please not just *otaku* but J-Pop fans and Hello Kitenites — with the antique. Kanji are after all, pictographs. "Studying kanji brings you into contact with Old Japan — with a pure form of the culture and the Japanese mind," Kushner writes. "Dating back about fifteen hundred years in Japan (and much longer in China), kanji provides a time capsule, giving us an

sight into the way people once made sense of the world."

BEST NEW SLANG WORD

Lightweight

The slang lexicon splendes as many words for marijuana and alcohol as the Inuit have for snow, so a new slang word with no ties to mind alteration is a particularly valuable acquisition. And "lightweight" is ever so useful. It roughly translates to "somewhat" as an adjective or "moderately" as an adverb; charmingly, it can be used as an adverb without any fussy addition of "ly." For example, if you heard something new on the radio that was alright but not spectacular you might say "Yeah, I hear that shit. It lightweight slaps." A fine use of the word comes in the title of a newly sprouted local blog, Lightweight Racist (LightweightRacist.blogspot.com). The site chronicles instances of discernible but not screaming racism like a Bruce Lee T-shirt with "Enter Wee" printed on it. Don't be fooled by how boring the word "lightweight" seems. Its pedestrian quality only means the slanguist can get ever so much more use out of it. No waiting for special occasions or a rap career to break this word out. Use it anytime, and make a mundane conversation light, weight race. And that thing about the Inuit? Lightweight racist.

BEST DIM SO SHOCKING WINE BAR NEWSLETTER

Alameda Wine Co.

2315 Central Ave Alameda 510-523-WINE.
AlamedaWineCo.com

There are two reasons to frequent Alameda Wine Company. It's an amazing new place, with knowledgeable, personable staff an artsy and intriguing atmosphere (the bar top a tribute to Jackson Pollock the colorful lighted back bar an homage to Piet Mondrian) great food (cheeses fresh fruit and dishes nuts of wee cured meats) and one of the best wine lineups in the East Bay, featuring a rotating collection of stellar Old and New World local and imported wines to sample and buy. The second reason to visit is owner Karen Ulrich, a newcomer to Alameda and one of the most colorful residents to date. You'll recognize her as the one with her head shaved in protest over a city business regulation. (Earlier in her protest she painted her head and face blue, too.) In mind Alameda she's become notorious for her newsletters. Sure, they're full of knowledgeable musings on new wines and vineyard histories, but the really juicy parts come from her personal essays about personal and professional crises, trysts, sexual explorations, and a sweet affair turned to vinegar. "I know many female customers live vicariously through those essays," says Ulrich. "And some men were happy to indentify at least one woman as a sexuality, a little better." At first blush one might think it would ruin her in a small city like Alameda—instead it has endeared her to many. To get a copy, talk to Karen directly. It's free, but by request only to protect the parties involved.

BEST PLACE TO REALIZE HOW PRIVILEGED YOU REALLY ARE

Photo Gallery, UC Berkeley Graduate School of Journalism

North Gate Hall, Howard Ave. & Euclid Ave
Berkeley, 510-642-3383

It's a formidable walk from the front gates of UC Berkeley, but the ever-changing photographic exhibits in North Gate Hall, home of the Graduate School of Journalism, are well worth the hike. North Gate's hallway is often curated by human photojournalists who travel into areas of conflict and uncertainty, and the images are always arresting. Exhibitions over the years have included Kashmir the aftermath of 9/11 and the Vietnam War. Check the school's web site for lecture events by the photographers and come away a little more connected to humanity. ●

CATEGORIES WE DID NOT THINK OF

BEST "BEST OF" PUBLICATION

Asking people to vote twice is asking a lot!
— *Kevin Sato*

BEST OAKLAND EVENT EVER!

Uptown Unveiled
We so badly need more actual Oakland get togethers like this one. Great entertainment, excellent music, and a crowd that only Oakland could produce — people of all stripes — mega economic stylists (and I do mean stylenet). I hella love this town sometimes. — *Sol Bednarz*

BEST MOCKIN' RELIGIOUS SERVICE

Temple Beth Abraham
— *Susan Shirk*

BEST WEEKLY NEWSPAPER

The East Bay Express
— *Devin Leaf*

MOST INCONGRUOUS JUXTAPOSITION OF YOUTH FOIL

Dive bar and baby yoga. How many people voted in both categories?
As always the categories provide much entertainment as I try to imagine your ideal respondent—this year strikes me as especially diffuse, as the categories seem more than usual all over the map, both narrow and at times self-contradictory. anyone who votes in all 126 categories (or 120+) should get an honorable mention and psychiatric help. — *Mary McGarry*

NEWSPAPER

Elk Express
— *Chris*

YOUTH ORGANIZATION

The Oakland Youth Chorus
They have been teaching music to kids in Oakland for the past thirty years and not getting any proud Latoya Lundden and Goapele came out of there! — *Rhonda Crane*

TICKETS ON SALE JULY 19!

OCT 21 W 7:30PM

THE UKULELE REIMAGINED

JAKE SHIMABUKURO
Davies Symphony Hall

Hawaiian-born Jake Shimabukuro has transformed the ukulele into a supremely pliable musical vehicle, capable of generating everything from scorching, effects-laden rock to sensitive, lovely swing in jazz.

OCT 29 TH 7:30PM

INSPIRATION FROM INDIA

RAVI SHANKAR ANOUSHKA SHANKAR
Davies Symphony Hall

Sitar legend Ravi Shankar's every performance is a transcendent experience, and at 89 this could be one of his last West Coast tours. He shares the stage with another star, his 28-year-old daughter Anoushka.

NOV 7 SA 7&9:30PM

JAZZ DOWN TO THE BLUES

SAVION GLOVER
Palace of Fine Arts Theatre

A stalwart phenomenon for his electrifying take in the musical *Bring In 'da Noise, Bring In 'da Funk*, tap dancer extraordinaire Savion Glover takes another major step in turning tap dance into a frenzied jazz instrument with his band The Others.

NOV 7 SA 8PM

BRILLIANCE FROM BRAZIL

MILTON NASCIMENTO
Nob Hi Masonic Center

Milton Nascimento's many collaborations with Herbie Hancock and Wayne Shorter have made an indelible mark on the history of both jazz and Brazilian music. For this performance the legendary Nascimento focuses his gorgeous multi-octave voice on the bossa nova ancestors that provided him with early inspiration.

NOV 8 SU 8PM

THE ESSENCE OF EXPRESSION

ORNETTE COLEMAN
Davies Symphony Hall

Free jazz revolutionary Ornette Coleman has lost none of his power as a transformational figure. The alto sax iconoclast morphs one of the world's most surprisingly beautiful sounds with a stinging melodic sensibility expressed in long, unnerving lines. An increasingly rare chance to see a true jazz giant.

NOV 21 SA 8PM

DOUBLE BARRELED BLUES BASH

KEB' MO' SOLOMON BURKE
Paramount Theatre

Multiple Grammy® Award-winner Keb' Mo' is a living link to the musical Delta blues, continuing in the footsteps of giants like Albert Collins and Taj Mahal. Keb's joined by Solomon Burke, the king of Rock n' Soul, whose songs have been immortalized by Wilson Pickett, Otis Redding and others.

THE COMPLETE FALL SCHEDULE

DISCOVER JAZZ
PIANO, JAZZ & BOOGALOOPHY
Thursdays Sept. 17-Oct. 15 7:30PM

SFJAZZ MEMBERS ONLY
ERIC REED
Saturday, October 19, 8PM

BENNY GOLSON SALUTE
EDDIE DANIELS QUARTET
Wednesday, October 23 7:30PM

OMAR SOSA QUARTET
FEATURING WILL LINDSAY
JOHN SANTOS SEXTET
Thursday, October 27 7:30PM

GONZALO RUBALCABA QT.
Friday, October 28, 8PM

MELODY GARDOT
Friday, October 28 8PM

HENRY BUTLER
Saturday, October 29 8PM

PONCHO SANCHEZ
Sunday, October 30 7PM

MARK MURPHY
WITH VIBBY VALANTINO
Sunday, October 30 2PM

GAL COSTA
WITH OSCAR CASTRO-NEVES
Sunday, October 30 7PM

ALFREDO RODRÍGUEZ
Sunday, October 30 2PM

BÉLA FLECK
ZAKIR HUSSAIN
& EDGAR MEYER
Wednesday, November 2, 7:30 PM

CINDY BLACKMAN'S
ANOTHER LIFETIME
Wednesday, October 30 8PM

YASMIN LEVY
Thursday, October 31 7:30PM

SACRED SPACE
NICHOLAS PAYTON
AND DON BYRON
Friday, October 31 8PM

BEE DEE BRIDGWATER
Friday, October 31 8PM

JAMES COTTON
SUPERHARP BAND
WITH HERBERT SUMLIN
Saturday, October 31 8PM

MARCO BENEVENTO
Saturday, October 31 9PM

MARC CARY FOCUS TRIO
Sunday, November 1 2PM

SFJAZZ HIGH SCHOOL
ALL STARS
Sunday, November 1 3PM

JOHN HANDY
SPANISH BLACK NAVARD
Sunday, November 1 7PM

GIOVANNI ALLEVI
PATRIZIA SCASCITELLI
Sunday, November 1 7PM

TRIO 3
OLIVER LAKE, REGGIE WORKMAN
ANDREW CYRILLE
Wednesday, November 4, 7:30PM

BACKYARD ALCHEMY
JESUS DIAZ, SCOTT AMERIELLA
& JAZ SAWYER
Wednesday, November 4, 8PM

ESPERANZA SPALDING
Thursday, November 5, 7:30PM

SARA TAVARES
Friday, November 6, 8PM

PAT MARTINO QUARTET
FEATURING TROY ROBERTS
LARRY GOLDINGS TRIO
Friday, November 6, 8PM

CAROLINA CHOCOLATE DROPS
Sunday, November 8, 3PM & 7PM

JOHN ABERCROMBIE
WITH MARK FELDMAN,
DREW GRESS & TERY HARRIS
Sunday, November 8, 2PM

SFJAZZ.ORG Info, sound clips & tickets. Or call 866-901-5299.

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Chris Duffey

BEST BAKERY

Nabolom Bakery

2708 Russell St. Berkeley. 510-845-2259

Talk about subculture. Nabolom Bakery has been feeding Berkeley freaks of all stripes since 1976. Collectively run the bakery is as vital an institution as the Long Haul People's Park, or the Purple House. In its 33 years Nabolom has supplied Food Not Bombs with baked goods and provided a venue for fiery meetings about everything from police brutality to yuppie dumb culture. But don't worry if your freak flag isn't flying quite that high the only thing Nabolom peddles is delicious pastries and good strong coffee — organic and fair trade, no less. Those in the know go for the cinnamon twist or the cranberry nut scuffin. There are plenty of vegan options too, and if you don't have ranch of a sweet tooth, Nabolom has a wide array of breads cheese rolls, and even pizza.

BEST EMPORIUM FOR FANATICAL BAKERS

Spun Sugar

1611 University Ave. Berkeley. 510-843-9192

SpunSugar.com

The Willy Wonkas of cake decorating, Bettye Travis and Linda Mirsene fulfill the frosting-topped fantasies of bakers and confectioners at Spun Sugar. Their candy land of a store. In addition to basics like cake pans cookie cutters and cream of tartar. The shop is stacked to the rafters with sugar charms and specialty flours, eco-friendly muffin cups and chocolate transfer sheets, gift bags, cook books a rainbow of paste colors, frosting tips from 1 to 352, and enough sprinkles to repave University Avenue. Casual bakers and pros alike can practice new skills in seasonal classes on everything from building concept cakes and tempering chocolate to handling croissant dough and designing whimsical cupcakes. Every summer youngsters measure and mix during weeklong Cooking Camps, while holiday gingerbread house classes let parents and kids bond while building. The sweet as-can be staff is always ready to help, so if your soufflé sags or your frosting flops, they'll help you find a recipe for success.

BEST MIDDLE EASTERN TREATS

Zand's

1401 Solano Ave. Albany. 510-528-7027

ZandPastry.com

With shelves of Middle Eastern groceries and deli cases full of hummus baba ghanoush, tabouleh, *kofte* spanakopita, and *teh-cheen* it's easy to pass over the selection of sweets that Zand's has to offer. However, doing so would be a huge mistake. Baklava made in the store is the most obvious stop on the Middle Eastern sweet train, and you could easily overindulge your sweet tooth with the different varieties they have on hand. Almonds, pistachios, and cardamom all take turns in the spotlight with flaky phyllo and intelligent honey. Premade aged treats run between $8 and $10 each and include *sahan* (almond brittle) and different mashups of pistachios almonds marzipan and rose water. The true prize is when you can grab a tray of *bomieh* or *zelbia* before they sell out. Fluffy pillows of fried dough *bomieh* are completely soaked through with sticky honey and aromatic rose water super sweet a few go a long way ... even

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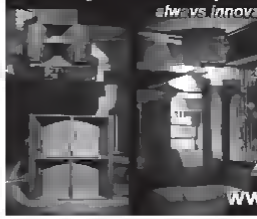
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though you'll have trouble stopping after the first few morsels.

BEST INDIGENOUS BAY AREA PASTRY

Morning Buns from La Farine French Bakery

6323 College Ave. Oakland, 510-654-0330; 3611 Fruitvale Ave. Oakland, 510-531-7755; 1620 Solano Ave., Berkeley, 510-528-2208; LaFarine.com

What do you get by combining the flaky buttery dough of a croissant with the pull apart cinnamon flecked seduction of a sticky roll? The irresistible morning bun of course. It all too easy to feast upon this regional addiction at bakeries like Masse's, Bread Garden and Hopkins Street (look for the cranberry flavor). But morning buns were actually invented back in the 1970s by La Farine's first owner Lil Leeper, according to current owner Jeff Dodge, and their recipe remains the gold standard. With caramelized crusts and tender, toothsome interiors, La Farine's buns taste luxurious but don't pack the gut busting wallop of most supersized American breakfast pastries. Although the classic recipe is sweetened with brown sugar and cinnamon, La Farine has lately started selling a ham and Gruyère version, making it possible to stuff your face morning, noon, and night. Hint: Get there early to taste the buns at their best and pair them with a cup of coffee.

BEST ASPIRING HOMEMADE CHEESECAKE MAKER

Victor Harris at Reuschelle's Cheesecakes

510-219-2987 Reuschelle@gmail.com

In these halcyon days of churlish boast-speak — "artisan" this and "organic" that — Victor Harris offers a refreshingly unpretentious dessert: the homemade cheesecake. The origins of his baking ambitions are likewise simple. Looking for something to do one night, the Oakland resident found a recipe online, ran out to buy cream cheese, and soon pulled his first cake out of the oven. That was in 2003. What began as boredom-induced pastry making has since grown into a part-time business. Reuschelle's Cheesecakes. The menu is as eclectic as the autodidact baker who is also a DJ and current music student. Customers can now choose from nearly fifty varieties of cakes, from the mainstream (strawberry) to the delightfully unexpected (peach amaretto) and the WTF (chocolate cayenne). The most popular cheesecake, the mousse-style caramel apple, has fresh fruit in every bite, a natural balance to the sweet caramel topping. Marketing is purely grassroots. Harris will arrive at parties and events with a cake in hand, ready to win over new fans (214 Facebook friends and counting). Also Reuschelle's Cheesecakes may soon be appearing at a local farmers' market. And for orders within a forty-mile radius of San Francisco, the baker will deliver the cheesecake himself.

Readers' Poll Winners

BEST BAKERY
Arizmendi

BEST BIKE SHOP
Missing Link Bicycle Co-Op

BEST BOOKSTORE
Moe's

BEST CAMERA STORE
Looking Glass Photo

BEST CANNABIS EVANGELISTS
Frank Lucido

BEST CAR DEALER
Green Motors

BEST CAR REPAIR
Arts Automotive

BEST CHEESES
Cheeseboard Collective

BEST CHILDREN'S STORE
Mr. Mopps'

BEST COMIC BOOK STORE
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Claremont Resort & Spa

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Grand Lake

BEST FURNITURE STORE
Urban Ore

BEST GAMES
Games of Berkeley

BEST HAIR SALON
Elixir

BEST HEAD SHOP
Annapurna

BEST JEWELER
Pavé Fine Jewelry Design

BEST LINGERIE
A La Folie

BEST MANICURES AND PEDICURES
The Nail Shop

BEST MEDICINAL MARIJUANA
Coffeeshop Blue Sky

BEST MEN'S CLOTHING
Dapper Man

BEST MOTORCYCLE SHOP
Godspeed

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Paws and Claws

BEST PLACE TO BUY A MESSENGER BAG
REI

BEST PHARMACY
Pharmaca

BEST PLACE TO BUY A T-SHIRT
Oaklandish

BEST PLACE TO BUY NEW BIKES
Manifesto Bicycles

BEST PLACE TO GET PIERCED
Zebra

BEST RECORD STORE
Amoeba Music

BEST SALVAGE STORE
Urban Ore

BEST SHOE STORE
The Walk Shop

BEST SPECIALTY RECORD STORE
Amoeba Music

BEST TATTOO PARLOR
Temple Tattoo

BEST TOY STORE
Mr. Mopps'

BEST USED CLOTHING
Buffalo Exchange

BEST VETERINARIAN
Montclair Animal Hospital

BEST VINTAGE CLOTHING
Pretty Penny

BEST WINE STORE
Kermit Lynch

BEST WOMEN'S CLOTHING
Pretty Penny

BEST BOOKSTORE

Book Zoo

6395 Telegraph Ave. Oakland, 510-601-0956; BookZoo.net

In an era dominated by big box book stores such as Barnes and Noble and Borders, not to mention online giant Amazon.com, Book Zoo stands out as a rare gem: a book store for book lovers. With an eclectic and unique selection of cheap used books and an extremely welcoming atmosphere, Book Zoo has in spades what the big stores try in vain to fabricate — namely, personality. This is not the kind of place where you go to find a specific book. This is where you go to browse and stumble across something truly special like *The Neverending Story* or the *Necronomicon*. Operating in the tradition of Moe's and the short-lived Books Not Com, Book Zoo is the quintessential Berkeley bookstore, filled with feminine editors, wingnuts and peaceniks. The confusing filing system only adds to the charm. Ask a staff member and they'll be more than happy to give you the guided tour.

BEST BIENNIAL BOOK SALE

The Friends of the Free Alameda Library Book Sale

547 West Red Lane Ave., Alameda; FriendsAlamedaFreeLibrary.org

Every May and October, the Friends of the Free Alameda Library — a fund raising group supporting Alameda's library system — holds a book sale at the DeWitt O'Club in Alameda's former Naval Air Station. They bring between 8,000 and 10,000 books to the sale, mostly donated throughout the year by Alameda residents. There's a lot of variety, hardbacks and paperbacks in almost every genre, as well as some out-of-print rare volumes. Prices for regular books usually run from fifty cents to two dollars. The biennial book sales were originally held to help

Readers Say the Darndest Things

BEST BAKERY

Arizmendi
The pizza sliver! — *Shale McGauerton*

Arizmendi
Cherry Corn Scones. Baby!!! — *Jon Fine!*

Bakesale Betty
Every weekend, Betty turns my hang over. Every weekend. — *Chase*

La Farine
Morning bun! — *Patricia Wakida*

Mariposa Bakery
Tasty wheat free brownies! — *Benjamin Thompson*

Naschen
The cinnamon twists fly through my dreams and their Josephine cookies must be lined with crack. The tollhouse are perfect hockey-sized reproductions of every kid's dream cookie. One of their chocolate croissants is tempting me right now from a bag on the kitchen. — *J. Crow Bolt*

BEST BIKE SHOP

Hank & Frank
It's like family! — *Camille Gobert*

Recycle Bicycle
Bikes are not disposable — crack heads know that, so do the thrift and helpful proprietors of Recycle. — *Margaret Penner*

Wheels of Justice
Love how they donate trade-in bikes to charity. — *Leslie Clavin*

raise funds to build a new library now that the library is built the sales go to help with library operations The sales goes on for three days, but the best day to go is Sunday afternoon Admission is free and their clearance deal is it can't miss for bookaholics For just a few dollars you can haul away an entire grocery sack of books and help out a worthy cause in the process

BEST BOOKSTORE FOR REALLY SMART PEOPLE

University Press Books

2430 Bancroft Way, Berkeley, 510-548-0565
UniversityPressBooks.com

Even after the tragic loss of Telegraph institution Cody's Berkeley is still home to a handful of amazing indie bookstores nearing their University Press Books Despite herd economic times and fierce competition from Internet sites, University Press Books continues to thrive under the original owners, husband-wife team Bill and Karen McClung, who founded the bookstore in 1974 With the slogan "Ten Thousand Minds on Fire" stretching across the top of the front door, the shop primarily attracts a crowd of professors grad students and otherwise nerdy folk, and carries titles from 140 scholarly and academic presses The store also organizes occasional author events, such as book signings The staff an eccentric group of bibliophiles with an encyclopedic knowledge of esoteric publishers is especially friendly and helpful and truly loves what they do

BEST MAGAZINE SHOP

Issues

20 Glen Ave Oakland, 510-658-5700,
IssuesShop.com

Grab a cup of coffee at Piedmont Avenue and duck around the corner into the biggest little magazine shop in the East Bay To browse Issues shelves is to travel the globe on titles both mainstream and obscure, dinosaur and imported Today's not playing it cool with *Vogue* and *Dazed* but tomorrow you might discover a wondrous new world in the pages of *Feline Wellness Puppetry International* or *Alpacas*. On the off chance that Issues doesn't carry the title you're looking for they can usually special-order it they're also happy to hold that new copy of my *Fi Racing* to ensure you get your fix. More than just a magazine store, Issues is also a neighborhood go-to for gifts, culture, and conversation. The friendly proprietors, Noella Teeh and Joe Colley, augment their panoply of periodicals with art exhibits, vintage books and handmade cards and since I own the local shop drop in to score the treats stashed behind the counter. Browsers are welcome, no one leaves without learning something new — and they let you bring your coffee

BEST AMBIANCE AT A BIKE STORE

Sharp Bicycles

1918 Mcanga Rd., Lafayette 925-284-9618,
SharpBicycle.com

Face it — a bike store crammed with road riders and their skinny bikes can be intimidating for the "Wow I like to bike" types. But the charming guys at Sharp Bikes make you feel just as important as those century riders who think Mount Tam is a lark and know all the terminology you don't There's none of the "woman of the hardware store" spintering here they listen and encourage you let you take a spin on their bikes, and if you're in a hurry and they're not busied up they'll put a bike together lickety split. They treat you the same whether you're pedaling a $500 hybrid or a carbon jewel that cost as much as last year's rent And despite being situated in an affluent 'burb, they don't try to overwhelm you with accessories either They're so accommodating, in fact that if your bike breaks down — and you're not handy with a tool kit — they may come to the rescue

BEST CAR REPAIR

Oceanworks & Oceanworks II

2700 Tenth St Berkeley, 510-849-1383,
AskAngus.com

Will I have trust issues and nothing tweaks them like car repair The grouchy guy turns the thingamajig and twists the hoo-ey, whatsit and $800 later the engine's still making that funny noise, But you and your vehicle can be assured of healing at Berkeley's Oceanworks and its sister garage around-the-corner Oceanworks II (each shop handles a different set of makes) After nearly thirty years in business owner Angus Pawelson has perfected a friendly no-nonsense approach to the automotive arts fixing what's broken — and never what's not — using only top-quality parts and suggesting multiple repair options that make you an active decision maker in your car's upkeep. All that and a fair price, too Go figure The garage's full name is Oceanworks Japanese Car Repair but they also work on all American makes a few European ones and Mini Coopers. Call ahead to reserve one of the well-priced in-house rental cars which have racked up about 120 000 miles each — your car might too if you entrust it to Oceanworks.



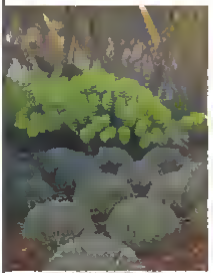
BEST PLACE TO BE LIKE HIGH & DRY

Mariner Square Dry Stack Marina

2615 Mariner Square Alameda

Imagine 240 yachts stacked four levels high on sturdy shelves inside a huge warehouse, like a Home Depot stocked with Sea Rays, Bayliners, and Donzas That's the look and feel of the Mariner Square Dry Stack Marina. For $300 a month, you can store a boat high and dry protected from barnacles saltwater vandals thieves, and the elements. But how about when you want to cruise the Bay? Easy Enter the mega forklift a gentle giant big enough to lift a 40 foot 9-ton boat with ceiling high shelf carry it outside, and lower it into the Oakland Estuary right outside. The whole process takes

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SUMMER LECTURE SERIES 2009
featuring Marion Brenner July 15th and Rondal Partridge July 30th


Photo by Marion Brenner

Marion Brenner is the Bay Area's premier garden photographer
Her work has been featured in Martha Stewart Living, Elle Decor,
House and Garden, The New York Times, and many more

Rondal Partridge is the son of Imogen Cunningham,
apprentice to both Ansel Adams and Dorothea Lange
He has been a living part of Bay Area photo history for over 80 years.

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Photo by Rondal Partridge

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BEST HAIR SALON

Down At Lulu's

SUBCULTURES BEST OF THE EAST BAY 2009

3023 Telegraph Ave Oakland, 510-601-0954, MySpace.com/downatlulus

Who the h-ll is that classic Farrah Fawcett flip that you're looking for or something a little more New Wave, the courteous staff at Down at Lulu's will accommodate you and make you look good! Whether you leave your locks in the hands of stylists Seth, Tina or Mitra, you will not be disappointed as the crew uses an oft-overlooked technique in the world of hair salons known as "listening to what the client wants." Not only will you walk out of Lulu's with a super cool do, but it's likely you'll also find something to complete your look from their primo collection of vintage clothing and accessories. Maybe you'll even find some good rock n' roll to put on your turntable when you get home, too. Down at Lulu's also gets extra subculture cred for staff members' involvement in the local music scene, playing in bands such as Top 10, The Bobbyteens, and Gravy Train!!!!

BEST HAIR ALCHEMIST

Lisa Galipault at Tique Salon

3022 Ashby Ave Berkeley 510-841-0208

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Annie D. in Oakland, CA (Yelp.com)

"Harborside is the only club I have been to that tests the finished product for THC percentages. The staff is friendly, they don't allow customers to handle clones and the selection of clones is great. The clones I have picked up from here have been in really good shape, probably some of the most healthy clones I have purchased so far. I would highly recommend this place!"

– International Cannagraphic Magazine Forums

"First of all let me say HARBORSIDE HEALTH CENTER IS THE PLACE *The treatment you get is 2nd to none. They are all for the community. This is a real 'Help Health Center'. From the time you pull into their parking lot until you walk out the door you are greeted with care and compassion. If you are not sure what dispensary to go to, then do not go anywhere but* HARBORSIDE HEALTH, *great selection, clean, nice music, like I said before this is the place."* **– Anonymous (Yelp.com)**

"I decided Harborside is too rad to give it a one word review. I'll tell you this much – I have an acupuncture appointment there this Friday (free), a chiropractor appointment next week (free), I've taken yoga from Jim (free – and he is by far the coolest guy at the place!) and I've got an herbal consultation coming up in May (free). Seriously? The intentions and legitimate concern for their patients is undeniable."

–Alvia Y. in Oakland, CA (Yelp.com)

Harborside Health Center
1840 Embarcadero, Oakland CA 94606
510 533-0166 harborsidehealthcenter.com

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Harborside Health Center

Don't think of her as a hairstylist think of her as your very own alchemist someone who knows just from your aura (or the look on your face) what you're like how you could look a lot better and what color and shape your hair should be. Accept it. Lisa Gahpanik knows better than you do. She's an artiste *des chevaux* and something of a clairvoyant. Trust her and she'll reward you many times over with a fashionable cut that makes you shiny and new. She transforms women — and guys too — from Berkeley-boring to pretty/handsome and stylish. She's the only one in her salon, if you don't count Lily, Lou and Baby, her three exquisitely well-behaved dogs scrunched together like reshaws on their dog pillow. There's also a caged and occasionally squawky parrot. While waiting for color to adhere you can recline in luxury on the chaise lounge and catch up on *People* magazines so you won't have to read them at the checkout line. Prices range from $45 for cuts for men to $65 for women; color and highlights cost more.

BEST CHEAP HAIRCUT

World Cuts

2440 Bancroft Way, Berkeley 510-640-1600

The recession's got us all looking a little shabbier than usual. At first glance World Cuts looks a little like a last resort. The walls are adorned with photos of Eighties-style tressed and feathered masterpieces and much of the clientele looks like biochemistry majors who have had the same hairstyle since junior high. But this unassuming family run hole-in-the-wall right next to the unaffiliated UC Hair Salon, is a well kept secret that delivers fast, stylish, and cheap haircuts to university students and money minded folks. Even with a bland exterior and run mall advertising, they've amassed a lot of a cult following over the years of regular customers who refuse to go anywhere else. The hairdressers here are surprisingly hip, competent and eager to please, particularly the manager, the super-friendly and personable Ryan. Getting a walk-in appointment is usually not difficult, and thirty minutes and $18 later ($15 for short hair) expect to walk out looking like you just blew your paycheck at a chic San Francisco salon.

BEST PUNK RECORD STORE

1-2-3-4 Go! Records

423 40th St., Oakland, 510-985-1025, 1234GoRecords.com

1 2 3 4 Go! proves that size doesn't matter. What the record-label-turned-store lacks in size it makes up for in quality. Here you will find a heaping helping of reasonably priced vinyl both new and used. Punk? Thrash? Rock? Grindcore? 1-2-3-4 Go! has it all and CDs, fanzines and T-shirts to boot. 1 2 3-4 Go! is an integral part of the local punk scene, supporting bands and small labels by carrying their goods and even hosting the occasional in-store show. Because of the niche market that the store caters to, 1 2 3 4 Go! wins out in the subculture department over bigger record stores such as Amoeba and Rasputin who, though we love them, are a little too big to be considered truly subcultural. Now go out and support the scene!

SUBCULTURES
BEST OF THE EAST BAY 2009

BEST MUSIC STORE FOR FOLKIE HIPPIES

Down Home Music

10341 San Pablo Ave., El Cerrito 510-525-2120, DownHomeMusic.com

If the musty smell of a room full of LPs makes you tingle (the twang of a banjo or balalaika stirs your heart...you probably already know about the roots music cornerstone of the Bay Area. Down Home Music in El Cerrito practically right across the street from Guitar Center, where teen rock-star hopefuls massacre Green Day songs on Fenders, the modest, windowless storefront emanates a sweet bluegrass sound. Opened in 1976 by roots recording icon Chris Strachwitz, who had been running his own Arhoolie Records label since the early Sixties and is responsible for creating a mammoth archive of folk music that would otherwise be lost to history, Down Home has become a meeting point for fans of many types of music: first blues, then bluegrass, Cajun, Tejano, and world music. Arhoolie still records them all and Down Home deals in them all with an extensive collection of CDs and LPs, as well as books, magazines, DVDs, and ephemera for sale or trade. In this year of layaways, bartering, and backyard victory gardens, there's no better time to visit Down Home and get back to roots.

BEST SOUND FOR THE DOLLAR

The Sound Well

1710 University Ave., Berkeley 510-549-2126, TheSoundWell.com

If you love music — not Dolby Digital Plus 7.1 channel surround sound but high fidelity audio — head to Berkeley's oldest stereo shop. Founded in 1974 just as quality equipment began infiltrating consumer electronics shops, the Sound Well offers an alternative to made-for-video home theater components that aren't designed for reproducing music. The Sound Well's repair servicr can keep your own vintage system healthy and refurbished classics from respected brands like NAD, KEF, Adcom, Denon, and Dual sell for a fraction of their original retail prices. Gearheads can build out a high quality system without having to cash out what's left of their retirement accounts and those needing TLC for a beloved component will find the Sound Well's technicians knowledgeable and highly skilled. Don't let the store's limited public hours put you off; it's a friendly shop that stays alive by watching its bottom line.

BEST URBAN FARMING SUPPLY STORE

Biofuel Oasis

1441 Ashby Ave., Berkeley 510-868-5500, BiofuelOasis.com

The gals that run Biofuel Oasis are a pretty savvy urban sustainability bunch and not just because they make and sell biodiesel from recycled vegetable oil. In their real lives



Readers Say the Darndest Things

BEST BOOKSTORE

Black Oak

I love the used cookbook section! — *Holly Le Du*

Cody's

Sob. — *Monya Rivera-Weiss*

Pegasus

Because it's still there. — *Jeremy Holland*

What bookstores?

They are all closing! — *Kelly Tschantz*

BEST CAMERA STORE

Looking Glass

Great selection, helpful staff. I'm not allowed in the bog-section without a chaperone. — *Jan Frisch*

BEST CAR DEALER

Hayward Toyota

My car dealer was hilarious. — *Imai*

Tip Top Bike Shop

'cause they sell the outrageous "SUN" — *Kim*

BEST CAR REPAIR

Young's Automotive

He's cranky but he's good! — *Conan Neutron*

Art's Auto Repair in Berkeley

They are a great auto repair shop and they have also made a big commitment to operating in an environmentally sound manner. They've learned how to work on hybrids and electric vehicles and have installed a solar electric system on their roof. They're also certified "green" by the Bay Area Green Business Program. — *Pamela Evans*

they also grow vegetables and fruit trad bees...and raise chickens, goats, and rabbits. Inside their new biodiesel filling station on the corner of Ashby and Sacramento they've also opened a nifty store that caters to other sustainability minded folks. Inventory includes a DIY bookshelf — filled with books on everything from growing your own food to creating your own water catchment system — beekeeping supplies and hardware, organic chicken feed and scratch, salt licks for goats, and more. Prices are similar to other places selling organic farm supplies. If you're new in the area, except of urban sustainability. They also offer Urban Farming classes on raising chickens, beekeeping, and biodiesel home-brewing, running from $25-$50

BEST THING TO HAPPEN IN BERKELEY THIS MILLENNIUM

Berkeley Bowl West

920 Heinz Ave Berkeley 510-898-9555
BerkeleyBowl.com

It's here. After seven years of planning, the Bowl has headed west, opening a decidedly industrial second location with a 140,000-square-foot natural foods grocery emporium. The best thing: There's free parking, plenty of it, including a parking lot and a multilevel parking garage. And customers and employees — now less stressed out about the ugly parking issue — seem happier. The inside skinny: Some components at the Oregon Street Bowl with WIDE aisles and a front-and-center health products center, but this spiffy-clean warehouse-ish newcomer is more fun to explore since now you're not blocking anyone's rear. Of course it's full of produce. It may just've never seen before, plus a set of heirloom tomatoes and mountains of stone fruit. There's a gleaming, deli case with prepared items too good to resist, including decadent desserts. Other attractions: Cheeses galore. Many meat fine fish, and plenty of poultry. Organic this organic that. Bulk food bins brimming with nuts, dried fruits, and arborio rice. More space for adult beverages. With its easy access to Interstate 80, high caliber customers and dandy digs, it's easy to see why the second location of Earth's Best Grocery is already attracting crowds. But it can handle 'em.

BEST EASTERN EUROPEAN GROCERY

Aria Supermarket and Bakery

1052 Webster St., Alameda, 510-337-0831

When you're faraway from home, the food just doesn't taste as good. The Aria Supermarket and Bakery brings a bit of the old country to Eastern European emigrants or anybody who simply wants to try out some Slavic soul food. Relive epic Balkic food battles on Aria's shelves as Croatian pudding battles Bosnian pie and chocolate Eurocream from Serbia clashes with Levapi sausages from Sarajevo. Perhaps Kras cookies and candies from Zagreb popular throughout the Slavic world, is the only hope for a sweet regional peace?

BEST ONE STOP SHOP FOR FOODIES

Alameda Marketplace

1660 Park St. Alameda.
510-865-1500.
AlamedaMarketplace.com

For many of us, the term "health food" brings to mind rice cakes and bran flakes, but the Alameda Marketplace will set you straight. Encompassing a dozen or several businesses that provide quality foods and drinks to bring home or eat on the go, the Marketplace is a mini mall for food lovers. Within these walls you will find everything from fine wines and cheeses at Farmstead Cheeses and Wines and fresh-baked bread and pastries at Feel Good Bakery to quality meat at Baron's Meat & Poultry, all anchored by the Alameda Natural Grocery, purveyors of sustainable and organic groceries and produce. And once you're done with your shop-



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ping frenzy, you can get off cup of joe at the Beanery, grab a sushi platter at Sushi King, or even get a relaxing massage in the supplements section. Looking for somewhere to take that special someone? The Marketplace is also home to Chung Hua restaurant, which provides authentic Beijing and Sichuan cuisine — food fit for royalty.



zydeco bands juice up the atmosphere, music fans lay out picnics on the lawn, shoppers peruse ripe tomatoes and Asian greens without long lines at urban price tags, and diners line up at food booths for Moroccan chicken and strawberry lemonade. You'd think that by August locals would be tired of whooping it up, but that's when they add a weekly movie to the roster right after the music ends, around 8:15 p.m. On Tuesdays, the action starts again with market and music at noon.

BEST BANG FOR YOUR BUCK AT A FARMERS' MARKET

Concord Farmers' Market

Todos Santos Plaza, Willow Pass & Grant Street, Concord, 800-949-FARM, PCFMA.com

If you've never consulted traveling east of the Caldecott Tunnel to pick up your veggies, there are a few things you should know: The weather's warm all summer, the parking in the garage next to Todos Santos Plaza is free, and the city of Concord knows how to party. By day, Todos Santos is a sleepy, square-block oasis of green grass where kids climb at a small playground and teenagers sip 99¢ Gulps near the stage. Thursday nights from May till September, a rockin' street festival ensues around a dozen or so produce vendors. Jazz, blues, or

BEST ROADSIDE CORNFIELD STAND

Mangini's

2498 Pleasant Hill Rd., Pleasant Hill, 925-934-7262

The corn is as high as an elephant's eye and the windmill looks like it's reaching way up the sky near the rudimentary green stand with an old tractor out front. It's one of the few remaining pieces of undeveloped land in the area. Roll along on Pleasant Hill Road, a bit south of Taylor Boulevard, and there's the field of corn that has been growing for you since spring. August is the hot month for being corny. Park near the stand. Stand and wonder at how green the corn is as the sunlight plays on it. Appreciate the importance of the red wheels on the tractor. Walk in to select corn picked that morning from the cornfield right there. Shuck an ear or two and take in the freshness. It also sells melons, squash, beans and stone fruit. Signs announce "Fresh white corn" and "Fresh Brentwood cherries." As Halloween approaches it's a pardon patch.

Readers Say the Darndest Things

BEST CHEESES

Cheeseboard

Is there any competition for this? Excellent service even when it's a madhouse. — Jonathon Parr

The Pasta Shop

Epoisse forever! — Theresa Nelson

BEST CHILDREN'S STORE

Children's Fairyland gift shop

Imagination-driven. — CJ Hirschfield

Dark Carnival

Okay, it's not all for kids. But that's what makes it the best children's store. — Kerrick

Depot for Creative Reuse

Okay, it's not a traditional — store, but it's right years better than [illegible] of plastic crap available. — J. Cruz Bell

Rockridge Kids

All the crap you never knew [illegible] needed' until you actually had a [illegible]. Plus some of the fun stuff. — Erra

Shakespeare

Up on San Pablo. Handmade wooden 'n' groovy screened Che Guevara bee's for tiny peeps. — La Mentia

BEST HORSE AND HUMAN MIND MELDER

Kay Fontaine

Reinstein Ranch, 8201 Highland Rd., Livermore, 925-580-0677

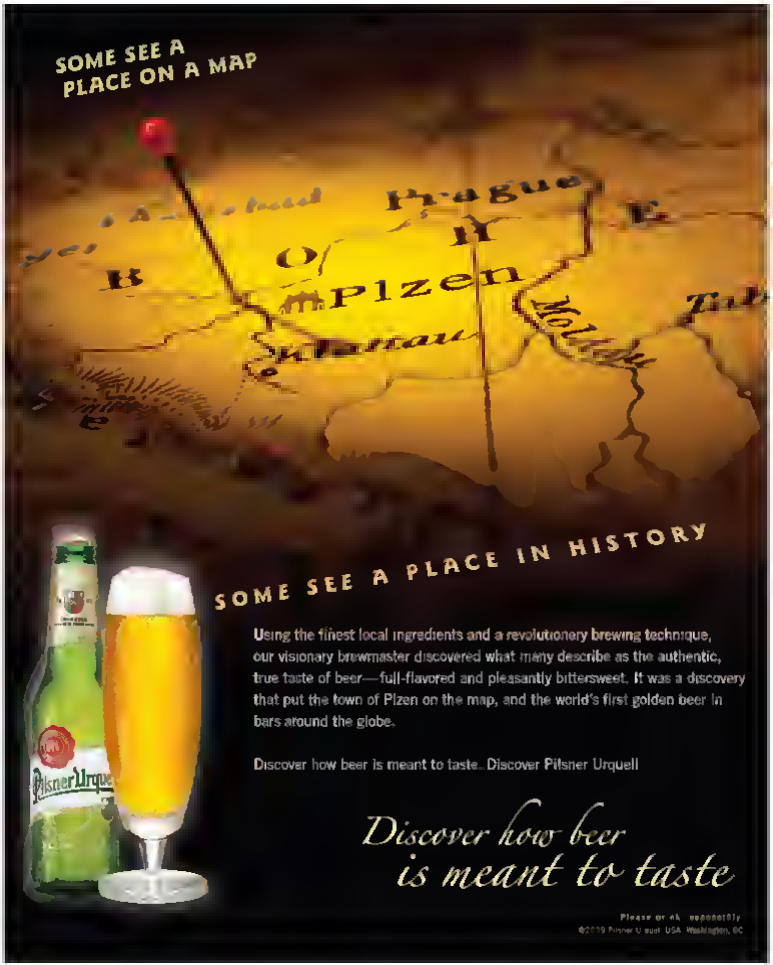
If you seek to understand horses the first thing Kay Fontaine will teach you is to suppress your instincts as a solitary predator and think like a prey animal living in a herd. Once you're past that, it's a snap. Prey animals live by fight or — mostly — flight. Herd animals bond for protection with each other — and with you, if you're kind, trustworthy and demonstrate leadership. Kay's received an equestrian trainer therapeutic riding instructor, competitor and teacher of just about every discipline in the equine repertoire. Fontaine insists that the natural horsemanship she teaches is nothing new. The Greek historian Xenophon laid it all out in 350 B.C. But leaky-brained humans tend to forget from time to time that kindness and understanding work better and more reliably than force. Fontaine doesn't care whether her students ultimately choose to go English style western or just mosey down a local trail as long as they do so with mutual respect, compassion for their horses and a lot of fun.

BEST LAWN FLAMINGO RENTAL

Flamingo Surprise

899 50th Ave., Unit # 1, Oakland, 510-532-7272, FlamingoSurprise-us.com

Sometimes there's only one thing that can express the feelings in your heart: fifty plastic lawn flamingos left surreptitiously on some-


SOME SEE A PLACE ON A MAP
Prague
Plzen
SOME SEE A PLACE IN HISTORY
Using the finest local ingredients and a revolutionary brewing technique, our visionary brewmaster discovered what many describe as the authentic, true taste of beer—full-flavored and pleasantly bittersweet. It was a discovery that put the town of Plzen on the map, and the world's first golden beer in bars around the globe.
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Please drink responsibly
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one's lawn in the dead of night. As far as can be documented, this classic method of canvassing started in a Chicago suburb in 1961 when twin brothers Rick and Ralph Ruhl decided to decorate the lawn of a couple using dozens of flamingos they had stolen as long as from homes in Parma, Ohio. The next day, unaware of the brothers $50 to do the same for one of his friends, and a business, Flamingo Surprise, was started. Five years later, Alamedans Kerry Hargrave and Armand Sutton convinced the Pazos to teach them the business and license them the Flamingo Surprise business name. Since then, the couple has moved the business to Oakland and expanded to penguins, dinosaurs, frogs, cowabunga, and more. But, of course, nothing beats flamingos.

BEST PARROT NANNY

Gayle Reece

Lafayette 925-283-5673, ParrotNanny.com

Dog owners have Wag Hotels; cat fanciers have the neighborkids. Now parrot people can turn to Gayle Reece aka the Parrot Nanny for deluxe boarding and in-home visits. Clients flock from Hayward and Tracy/Napa and Anchorage Alaska to get her extraordinary care for their feathered friends and a guilt free vacation (or just a quiet weekend at home) for themselves. Guests stay in Gayle's comfortable Lafayette home, a parrot paradise filled with toys, play stands, and the chatter of contented birds. Everyone enjoys nutritious home-cooked Fettucine Cuisine, plus fresh fruits and veggies treats showers, and ample personal attention. Bigger parrots can even earn some rays in protected outdoor enclosures. To ensure safety, a health exam is required in advance, but birds with special medical or behavioral needs are welcome. With years of experience hand feeding babies, educating owners, and getting inside those bird brains, Gayle sets the gold standard for dedication to parrots and their people — who can both benefit from a little vacation now and then.

Readers Say the Darndest Things

BEST EAST BAY PRODUCT

Awwsomeness
— Sahar Shirazi

BEER
— Terry Farry

Hankers and pet!
— Kelly D

Jazz musicians from the Berkeley Public School system
— Kevin Sutz

Love
— Samantha

PUNK ROCK
— Jim Redens

Storytelling
— Elizabeth Overmyer

Therapy!
We have great therapists in the EB
— NF

Weed
— Gwynne Coffee

BEST EAST BAY WINERY

Rosenblum
Hands down. *— John*

BEST FACIAL

Fem Velus
Diane only uses the best organic products and has the cutest dog. *— Lise Haribus*

La Nana
I look 5 years younger after one of their facials. Sana. *— Sanlazaf*



Best lawn flamingo rental, Flamingo Surprise — Chris Duffey

BEST SHOP FOR BABY BIRDS

Your Basic Bird

2940 College Ave., Berkeley, 510-841-7917

Whether your passion for pet birds leans towards the amateur (the $15 parakeet that lives at its mirror more than you) or the obsessive (all of your clothing is cockatoo-themed), Your Basic Bird makes it easy to keep your feathered kids screeching with joy. Since 1981 owner Claudia Hundley has kept it old-school at this homey pet shop in Elmwood right down to the squeaky screen door and tightly packed shelves. In addition to birds, fish and various types of adorable furry creatures, the shop sells high-quality, organic feeds in bags and bulk, and well-made toys at fair prices. Avian boarding, grooming, and expert advice are available from employees who know their Meyers parrots from their Senegals. When the typical pet shop these days is a megachain with as much character as Home Depot, the decibel level alone will remind you that there's nothing corporate about this place.

BEST PLACE TO PICK UP CHICKS

Mike's Feed & Pet

710 E 14th St., San Leandro, 510-638-3665

Mike's Feed & Pet may look like a regular pet store on the outside, but looking past the standard fare of fish, mice, birds, and dog and cat supplies, it's clear this downtown San Leandro pet supply store caters to a much wider audience. Particularly in the spring and summer months when they get fresh shipments of baby chicks. Loads of them. And depending on who's doing the ordering, you can pick up a number of different varieties from Araucanas (blue/green egg layers), Leghorn (great for meat) Rhode Island Reds (great egg layers) and dozens more. You can take home a handful of little, feathery fluff balls, ranging from $3.99 to $4.25 each, to start your own backyard flock. There's no guarantee on "sexing" (determining whether a chick is male or female), but the guys at Mike's are pretty good at it. Plus, the staff, led by manager Joe, is very helpful and up-to-date on most pet and livestock issues.

BEST WINE TASTING ROOM

St. George Spirits

2601 Monarch St., Alameda, 510-769-1601

StGeorgeSpirits.com

Located in an old airplane hangar on Alameda's former Naval Air Station, the St. George Spirits tasting room bar looks across the abandoned Navy overruns to the San Francisco skyline. The St. George staff also makes the experience a superb way to spend part of an afternoon. The bartenders together with managers Lou Bustamante and Andie Ferman (aka the Vodka Vixen) keep your experience educational and entertaining. Through large windows, you can glimpse distillers Laurr Winters and Dave Smith mixing, checking, tasting, and adjusting along huge beautiful copper stills. Tips, best free, informal tours of the distillery an well-costs starting at 3 p.m. for $10, which includes a glass and one "flight" of brandy, vodka, whiskey, liqueur, or absinthe to taste.

BEST LIQUOR STORE FOR ASPIRING MIXOLOGISTS

Ledger's Liquors

1398 University Ave., Berkeley, 510-540-1243

LedgersLiquors.com

On an average day, Ed Ledger has 500 beers (on single-malts, 80 bourbons, and 125 tequilas for sale in his shop. "Currently I've got 13 different bitters in stock," he says. "In most places you're lucky to find one or two." Customers come to Ledger's Liquors for products that tend to be overlooked in less ambitious liquor stores, locally made spirits like Sorticeau gin and Hangar One vodkas, East Ellington honey wine from Oakland, artisan cocktail ingredients, and obscure microbrews. Since 1935 it's been a family affair. Ledger's grandfather applied for the 14th liquor sales license in California after Prohibition ended. It cost him $50. "When I took over the business my dad wanted me to bring it back to life as a true liquor store," says Ledger, and customer satisfaction is always a top priority. "As soon as you think you sell everything, someone comes in the door looking for something new," he says. He's more than happy to oblige.

BEST WINEMAKER WITHOUT A VINEYARD

Adams Point Winery

510-394-1084, AdamsPointWinery.com

In a world trampled by purple-toed winemakers renegade winemaker Bill Gabarnoeu has chucked convention to the wind to stew up the oddest and rarest wines in the Bay Area His small Berkeley operation features fermented elixirs made with tropical and subtropical fruits and run between 12 and 20 percent alcohol They technically aren't even wine — this pioneer in for non-grape fruit booze is melomil, with "wine" officially designated for fermented grape juice — but those who would get snooty over this nonmelatural detail can take a hike to Napa. Currently, Adams Point Winery makes Mango Wine, Mango-Papaya Wine Persimmon Wine Persimmon Dessert Wine, Mango Dessert Wine, and Chocolate Dessert Wine, a stunning portlike drink that's as rich as chocolate mousse On-site tastings have gone on hold as Gabarnoeu seeks a new location for the winery, which has outgrown its current home but the wines can be found at Ledger's Liquors and Montclair Village Wines. For an in-person tasting, visit Jack London Square on August 8 for the Urban Wine Experience where Gabarnoeu will be pouring his lineup amidst a flood of sour grape juice

BEST BREWERY

Linden Street Brewery

95 Linden St, Ste 7/8, Oakland, 510-832-3345, LindenBeer.com

Oakland was a great brewing town at one time, and Adam Lamoreaux, the founder of the Linden Street Brewery, knows that it will be again After years of delays, the brewery located down by the railway tracks in West Oakland just started pumping out its first production brew The "Urban People's Common Lager" It is a clean crisp treat between a lager and an ale, with a nice hoppy bite Lamoreaux was known for the Friday afternoon kegs at the brewery last year when he was content brewing out of the Drake's Brewery in San Leandro But you don't have to go down to Linden Street for the beer he is delivering to The Trappist and Pannikin's in downtown Oakland, The Brown Sugar Kitchen on Mandela Parkway and the Fireside in Alameda. Stay tuned on plans to introduce two new beers in the coming months Burning Oak black lager and Golden Glow light lager named after a local beer that the former Golden West Brewery produced in Oakland in the 1940s and 1950s.

BEST PLACE TO MISS THE FERRY

Rosenblum Cellars

2900 Main St., Ste 1100 Alameda 510-995-4100 RosenblumCellars.com

Nothing beats a refreshing jaunt on the ferry across the Bay from Alameda to San Francisco especially on a sun-drenched weekend day What makes the excursion even better however is a quick stop at Alameda's Rosenblum Winery and tasting room almost too conveniently located just a few hundred feet from the ferry dock Inside an old railroad building, The upstairs tasting room is staffed by a crew of friendly wine aficionados who are more then willing to impart their share of extensive wine knowledge to visitors as well as happily doling hearty doses from the last ung menu (the first four to five wines are free $8 will get you a complete tasting, including their selected reserves) Everything from the sweet Viogniers to its hearty robust reds that swell with flavor (founder Kent Rosenblum is noted for helping fuel the popularity of the Zinfandel varietal in California in the 1970s) is varietal, solely passing Grapes are harvested and shipped from Napa, Sonoma Monterey Paso Robles and Amador County (and beyond) and sorted, yeasted, fermented and extracted in small batches on site So you missed the ferry So what? After a half hour at Rosenblum you may forget why (or where) you were going in the first place

BEST PLACE TO SMORE IN PUBLIC

The Pub

1492 Solano Ave Albany, 510-525-1900

In California smokers are practically second-class citizens, vilified in the media scorned in public and outlawed almost anywhere with four walls and a roof The last vestige for the renegade smoker is your friendly neighborhood tobacconist The Pub takes that basic concept and trumps it by offering draft beer coffee, and espresso drinks and the classy atmosphere of a British pub on a Sunday afternoon The Pub is the sort of place that Sherlock Holmes might retire In after a hard day's sleuthing. Here he could engage in civilized conversation with distinguished gentlemen. They would sit around the fireplace taking puffs from their respective pipes, sipping ale or strong coffee. They would twirl their moustaches and cough as they tried to interject into the dialogue. The dogs (St. Bernards and Great Danes) would snooze on the floor in front of a wood n panic table. Wooden floors and worn furniture, the smell of hops and fine tobaccos soaked into the wood Soaking out on the bank patio or the front deck This place smells like your grandpa's study..and it's probably more fun too

BEST DISPENSARY

Harborside Health Center

1840 Embarcadero Oakland 510-533-0140, HarborsideHealthCenter.com

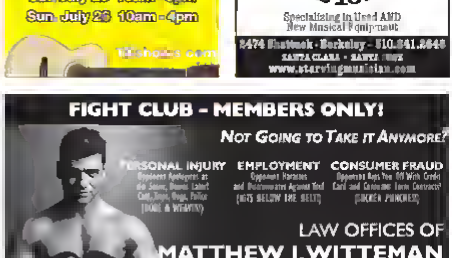
The kind lads are always in stock at the Harborside Health Center This is the ta mous port side dispensary that sheils out its hard earned drug monies to test the THC content of its buds Then passes the high on to you. If you're willing to pay $60 for an eighth you can get the stinkiest of the inky-bushy green buds That will adhere them selves to your fingers while you're packing a bowl They've also got a huge selection of edibles tinctures, and elouds to boot — all top quality. The main here is a mass act and behaves professionally at all times, even if the long lines of customers don't. Even with every counter open there is sometimes still













a doubled-over line. That's understandable though, as this is the East Bay's nicest cannabis dispensary by far.

CHEAPEST DISPENSARY

Blue Sky

377 17th St., Oakland, 510-251-0690

In these desperate times of skyrocketing unemployment, psychotropic prices and generally whacky life, there is one thing you can rely on...Blue Sky will always be there to take care of you. Originally named after a top secret spy plane (the SR-71 Blackbird), Blue Sky is the cheapest place to find good buds in Oakland. There are a lot of other places that sell dirt weed for chicken feed, but Blue Sky has always kept quality eighths in stock at $44 a pop. That's a reasonable charge for some reasonable buds. Plus, Sky is the granddaddy of Oakland cannabis clubs, and while it's true that their greens won't make you see god, the shop is open seven days a week and they never sell shwag as kind. Truly an old standby.

BEST INDOOR GROWING SUPPLY STORE

3rd Street Hydroponics Warehouse

636 3rd St., Oakland, 510-452-9621

Where do the indoor growing experts go to meet all their indoor growing needs? They look no further than Jack London Square at 3rd Street Hydroponics Warehouse. With a huge inventory and a staff that knows its business, you'll be certain to get a lamp or whatever it is that will make your indoor garden sing, too. Hydroponics, grow lights, nutrients, water and air filtration systems — whatever it takes. This fifty-year-old family owned business has kept it real, man. For newbies and hobbyists they've recently opened the Technical Institute for Indoor Gardening, a new educational center on 4th Street in Oakland that offers classes in all aspects of indoor growing.

BEST ALTERNATIVE TO BABIES 'R' US

Rockridge Kids

5911 College Ave., Oakland, 510-601-5437
RockridgeKidsStore.com

For parents who want to support a local, independent kids' store, that's a sure shot. This family-owned business has got some of the most interesting toys around (how about a DJ set for your toddler?) and a train table that will entertain the little ones while you shop. They also have gear that rivals the big conglomerates. Take your pick of car seats and strollers, all laid out neatly for you (or rather, your children) to try out, and even rocking chairs and high chairs. (The only things they don't have, it seems, are diapers, wipes and underwear.) It's also a great place to buy gifts, since they'll gift wrap for free. Parents know they're in good hands when they enter Rockridge Kids: from the phthalate- and BPA-free foodware to the ear seats installed by an expert for free.

BEST NEW SPACE FOR TOYS

Lotus Bloom Child and Family Resource Center

2008 Park Blvd., Oakland, 510-633-0612,
Lotusbloom.tripod.com

Is there a better way to start your baby's life than fostering love for all people? Since this multicultural play space Lotus Bloom opened on Park Boulevard in March 2009, parents and nannies have been bringing their kids to play there. The organization, funded by donations, city money and an Annie E. Casey Foundation grant, provides structured bilingual playgroups for Chinese-, Vietnamese- and Spanish-speaking families, as well as playtimes for African-American families mirroring the neighborhood's diversity. The drop-in play time is only $1 and it provides arts and crafts, singing, circle time and a snack. It definitely gives the low-budget family a safe haven for their kids. The groups are designated multicultural playgroups, and you will find a mix of folks at this new space just down the street from the ones and future Parkway Theater.

BEST PLACE TO RECLAIM THE CHILDHOOD YOUR MOTHER THREW OUT

Toy Go Round

1361 Solano Ave., Albany, 510-527-1363,
EToyGoRound.com

A garage sale spring cleaning, moving away to college — whatever the reason many priceless toys slipped away as you left childhood behind. From a long time eBay has been a great spot for finding those childhood friends, but too often you end up spending $80 on an action figure because it's still in the box and considered a collector's item. Forget eBay and head to Albany, where you can pick up a few memories that won't break your piggy bank. Toy Go Round does offer some mint on-card toys, but most of its selection ranges used and consigned toys with little to no wear. Especially impressive is the assortment of action figures — a twenty-something nerd's wet dream. Knights and boxes overflow with He-Man, M.A.S.K., Marvel, and DC superheroes, wrestling figures, Star Wars, Star Trek, Transformers (pre-Michael Bay) and Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. Most figures are around $5 to $8 (comparable to what you paid after saving up a month's allowance in 1989) and come complete with that giddy, gleeful feeling in your stomach that recalls summer vacation, Saturday morning cartoons and sugar cereals. Stepping inside Toy Go Round with its dim lighting and slightly dusty smell, is like entering a giant toy box that's been sealed up for years. Without worrying about ruining an $80 investment, you're free to take those toys out of the box and play for hours until your mom calls you for dinner.

BEST TOY STORE SUPPRESSES

Mr. Mopps'

1405 Martin Luther King Jr. Way, Berkeley,
510-525-9633

If you lie awake at night wondering "How can I going to supply my band with instruments ...



Readers Say the Darndest Things

BEST FARMER'S MARKET

Lake Merritt

Whenever I go there I'm reminded of everything that's right about Oakland. — *Mjeri Eaton*

Old Oakland on Friday's

B g and cheap! — *Camille Gebert*

BEST FURNITURE STORE

The street dumpsters after Berkeley students move out.

Because they throw everything out. — *Lucie*

National Furniture Liquidators

It a crazy cheap, and usually pretty quality stuff. Screw Swedish particle board buy something that will last. — *Aaron Scott*

BEST HAIR SALON

Avenue Cuts

Grunt price, great fun, and Chrissy will talk bonkmill wit you. — *Chris Kidd*

Down at Lulu's

They make my hairs bigger. — *Luna*

BEST HEAD SHOP

Berkeley Hot

I know you mean pot store, but I had to give a shout out to the fabulous Berkeley Hat! — *Don't Publish My Name*

BEST LINGERIE

Panties from a stand in front of Marna Suzuki during Oakland Art Murmur

They were handmade. (I don't know if it was a one-shot deal or if she will be back.) — *Alexis Belington*

changity?" then Mr. Magpie's is for you. Especially if your band's lineup includes a plastic slide whistle a harmonica, and two sizes of Razoo and your budget is $3.40 plus tax. While Mr. Magpie offers a brilliant selection of toy-shop staples (games, books, stuffed animals, building sets, dolls, craft and sea necklaces you-sew, wooden railroads, and party supplies) it's the racks of inexpensive novelties that offer up the shop's best surprises. Looking for a pirate eye patch or a peanut-shaped eraser? Miniature music boxes or a rubber-band paddle boat? Mardi Gras beads, flicker-art rulers, glow sticks, or a bamboo finger catcher? There's a huge selection of name-brand toys to satisfy specific desires or get giving needs, but the serendipitous stock is what will leave you smiling. Walk in without an agenda and you'll walk out with a world-eliminating army of windup cats, monkeys, chicks, penguins, and ladybugs

BEST RECYCLING MICROBUSINESS

Bird vs. Bird

BirdVersusBird.etsy.com

By day, proprietor Bess Petty works as a graphic designer at a sign shop, helping announce the East Bay's grand openings. In the evenings, she toils away on her sewing machine, listening to NPR as she churns out purses adorned with sketched graphics of kingfishers and goldfinches. The bird purse is the classy bird Petty's also works her boldly realistic depictions of various species — plants and forest critters as well as birds — onto rain purses, magnets, and stickers. She sketches her designs in Adobe Illustrator using a Wacom tablet, which is a bit like using a magic pen that can draw onto a computer screen. The inspiration for the merchandise came in 2005 when Petty, a self-described crafty cheapskate, despaired over the scrap material her employer was hauling out to the trash. She began reclaiming the scraps, printing her bird designs on spare bits of the nylon reinforced vinyl material used to make banners, then sewing the images into handmade purses. Later she invented a use for the adhesive-backed vinyl used to print rigid signs. Those scraps became stickers and magnets. Petty's standard design set includes twelve birds, six critters, and six plants, and she occasionally creates custom designs as well.

BEST LOCAL T SHIRT MAKERS

The Girl and Rhino

TheGirlandRhino.com

Subtle but clever and wry humor rule Adam Borowski's T shirt line the Girl and Rhino. The image that launched the collection is a cranium. Port of Oakland dreaming about life as a Star Wars AT AT Walker, but bird humor, politics, knock knock jokes, and whatever else (bikes and pipes, for instance) make their way into the Girl and Rhino designs. Pigeons parade over life as living cats; blackbirds can template Rhinehook screen tests, and Polly the parrot wants the f%@# out of the cage. Mean while T shirt fanciers get on the presidential bandwagon with an Obama FILF proclamation. The name for the line comes from a poignant hopeful tale that Borowski who credits B. Kliban, James Thurber, and Edward Gorey as major influences, wrote about a sad little girl who was without friends until she meets in her attic a rhino that lives off the crumbs of her cookies and cakes and makes her laugh. You can find his T shirts, hoodies, onesies, and infant tees online and at local farmers markets, so keep an eye out

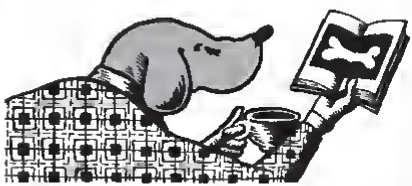
BEST HIPSTER FANNY PACK

P.E.A.C E. (Planetary Elements Activating Conscious Evolution) Fits

PeaceFits.com

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ain AudreasOne, of Oakland. This slim-fitting utility belt fits snugly around your hips, leaving your hands free for all the urban adventures you can handle. The belt-purse features pockets in a range of sizes to fit all your small eating needs. These two-tone wearable bags are made in a "sweatshop-free environment" in Bali with designs in three Earth-friendly shades of 100 percent cotton. The pattern could be a close-up of the winding paths of a microscopic insect trails carved in wood or a cosmic looping labyrinth depending on your perspective. AudreasOne's fashion designer graphics guru and fine artist says he's been inspired by a range of influences from the tribal to the futuristic from Celtic knotwork to Mayan textiles. He calls his gear "styles for a new paradigm." Don't be surprised if you inspire your own tribe when people see you strolling down the street wearing this piece based on the art artist's signature design. In addition to the belt-hoodies, and hats other wearable works of art are also available from his web site and in Berkeley at Organic Roots.

BEST UNTAPPED WAREHOUSE-SIZE THRIFT STORE

Thrift Town

3665 San Pablo Dam Rd., El Sobrante
510-222-8966, ThriftTown.com

The "town" in Thrift Town's name is an appropriate moniker for El Sobrante's bustling secondhand store, as the space is populated with enough used goods to equip a small village. Granted, at times the "town" can feel more like a zoo — with kids climbing clothing racks and carts crowding the aisles — but with the store's copious amount of clothing, kitchenware, jewelry, knickknacks, furniture, and electronics, it's a pretty good bet you'll walk away with at least one good find. Besides the chaotic atmosphere lends to its charm — used treasures shouldn't come too easy. And because the East Bay store — one of seven California locations in the Thrift Town chain — is tucked away in El Sobrante, where it's slightly out of reach of BART hopping thrifters, there's a good chance the racks won't be entirely ransacked by the time you reach them. Fans of flannel, jean jackets, granny sweaters, and other gently used goods would be wise to circumvent pricey vintage stores and hit Thrift Town's racks for a good selection of affordable fashions often in the $2 to $3 range. (And don't be surprised if you barge into a local vintage-shop owner buying merchandise for marked up). Each week a different color of sale tag is featured, and items tagged accordingly are 50 percent off.

BEST ANTIQUE PRICES

Red Geranium

514 West Second St., Antioch, 925-778-2221

West Second Street is one block from and parallel to the San Joaquin River. Far-industrial for visitors but bad for business if is not a bustling street, which may be why prices are so good at the Red Geranium. Bill Heapy is the owner and he will wait on you. Plenty of Fiesta Ware and Melmac. Dishes are set up on Formica tables with grey and yellow Naugahyde chairs. On a table with turned legs is a set of cups and saucers of most beautiful translucent green. This place is loaded with good finds of many eras. Heapy also restores antiques. Bring your loved ones to him and he will work on it with skill and care and return it to you for a reasonable price. Second Street itself is a wonderful collectible, where you can get yourself together.

BEST CHIC BOUTIQUE

Duchess Boutique

3587 Mt. Diablo Blvd., Lafayette, 925-962-0808, ShopDuchess.com

Looking for J Brand jeans but can't fathom hearing bridge traffic? Forget the City and trek towards that other side of our East Bay world, through the Caldecott Tunnel. We know what you're thinking. *The burbs? Please.* But if you are desperate to update your wardrobe it's a time to consider reconsidering across the proverbial aisle to see what that "other side" has to offer. Lafayette's the Duchess — boasting top-notch designers like Charlotte Ronson, Elizabeth and James, Hattie Hyppie, and La Rok — opened its doors in 2007 and has been providing the East Bay with fabulous clothes shoes and accessories ever since. With blue rug wallpaper and brass racks organized by color themes and styles, it's cute and classy. Sign their guestbook and receive phone calls when new stuff from one of your favorite designers comes in. So when you finally save enough cash for those oversized Oliver Peoples shades (swoon) you know where to find them.



BEST WOMEN'S ATHLETIC STORE

See Jane Run

5817 College Ave., Oakland, 510-428-2681, SeeJaneRun.com

See Jane Run is excellent at serving both the novice and expert female athlete. It's as much a sports-oriented community center for casual and serious female competitors as it is a top-notch retailer of women's athletic gear. Knowledgeable staffers can help take the mystery out of sports bras, wet suits, and bike shorts for beginners. Likewise seasoned veterans can rely on See Jane Run to stock the most technically advanced goods available to give them the competitive edge they need, whatever their disciplines from running to cycling to swimming. At the core of See Jane Run is an underlying commitment to empower women to free their inner athletes in a non-intimidating way. And See Jane Run is way more than athletic shoes and sports watches. Its yoga tops, wrinkle-free skirts, stylish sundresses, comfy hoodies, jackets, and purses for all on the-go East Bay gals.

BEST HAT STORE

The Hat Guys

1764 Broadway, Oakland, 510-834-8888, HatGuys.com

Where do the guys in the entertainment industry go for advice on hats? The Hat Guys on Broadway in Oakland. The reason. They



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comcast.

have the largest hat inventory on the West Coast, estimated to be worth more than $3 million. ball caps dress caps casual caps beanies and tams parkpies, collapsible top hats ten gallon cowboy hats outbacks fedoras Panama straws, berets stingy brims visors, and more (Their bolira hat selection isn't as extensive, alas.) The Hat Guys customer service is superb and they also sell hats online. Plus, they will ship anywhere in California for free if you mention you've visited their website



Best distillery tasting room St. George Spirits

Chris Duffey

Readers Say the Darndest Things

BEST MANICURES AND PEDICURE

Galaxy Nails on Claremont

You get a long neck and shoulder massage, when you book a mani-pedi! heaven. — *Cathy Curtis*

BEST NEW BUSINESS

Barleia

Perfect hostess delicious food, and actual small plates with small plate prices! Finally a real tapas restaurant in the East Bay! — *Christo*

Rhoda e Designs from the Heart

It's mine; if I don't vote for it — *Rhoda Catalan*

BEST PET STORE

Lucky Dog

They're local. Yes, they need a face-lift. Bring them your business so they can afford one. — *Lauramie Gruen*

Pet Food Express

Or at least, that's my dog's favorite one to go to. — *Adam Beck*

Kool Hound

Great staff and service and dog treats! — *Rebekah Kaplan*

BEST PHARMACY

Pharmaca

Now that Elephant's gone. — *Jamie Holland*

BEST PLACE TO BUY A MISSING IN BAG

Montana Velo

(Stupid question by the way). — *Morgan*

BEST PLACE TO BUY A T-SHIRT

Fifty-seven-Thirty-three

No one else in the room will be wearing the same shirt and they are the best! — *Ruth Bejuk*

Looking Glass Photo

Think Negative; Film is not Dead Need I say more? — *Jon Freel*

BEST PHOTO LAB

Ag Photo - Digital Image Lab

6934 College Ave Oakland 510-652-8423

We know you're out there — the neo-Luddites and steam punks who flatly refuse to use digital cameras for sheer cameraness and aesthetic reasons. Well there are still photography studios out there that love you too and Ag's one of them. This family-owned business develops prints, and enlarges both digital and emulsion prints with love and care. Unlike a lot of chain stores and high-speed outfits, they still actually relate to each picture they print so that customers get the best possible version of their photograph. The results are astounding: lively colors, bright tones and sharp images. As if that weren't enough, the staff remembers their customers and keeps track of the progress of their photographic efforts. Ag should be supported by everyone who cares about quality and the health of their local business community.

BEST ENDANGERED PLACE TO HAVE A GOOD TIME AT 5 A.M.

Longs Drugs aka CVS/pharmacy

5100 Broadway Ave Oakland, 510-654-2560, CVS.com

On late nights, when you find yourself wandering the streets of Oakland, pondering the meaning of life and smiling over your own personal dilemmas, sometimes the only answer comes in the form of a 24 hour drugstore. Lucky for you there's Longs Drugs in North Oakland commonly referred to as "Big Longs" or "Super Longs." Actually, as of this year it became a CVS/pharmacy, along with a slew of Longs stores throughout California, but somehow "Big CVS/pharmacy" just doesn't have that same endearing ring. There's comfort in knowing that at any time of day or night you can trek up Broadway or just Street toward the drugstore's warm glow. And it's surprisingly therapeutic to wander its many aisles, browsing the endless supply of household products and feeling the unabashed freedom and relief of never having to leave. Sadly, it looks like the friendly giant may be going from 24 hour to zero. In a flier distributed to homes in Rockridge, Safeway announced plans to demolish the 50,000 square-foot store and put in a new high-end Safeway, while CVS/pharmacy is apparently in negotiations with the shopping center to construct a new 12,000- to 13,000-square-foot pharmacy. The days of renting a Top Dog in the shade of the garden center may be limited, so visit while you still can.

BEST HOBBYIST'S BASEMENT

Berkeley Ace Hardware

2145 University Ave Berkeley, 510-845-0410

There are several East Bay shops that could get a "Best Hardware Store" award, including El Cerrito's Pastime Hardware and Oakland's Marcus Supply, but only Berkeley Ace Hardware has a secret weapon in its basement: a full-blown hobby shop. Many will recall the basement for its model railroading supplies (which still includes an excellent stock of track, trains, control lers, paint plus scale people, animals and buildings) but its selection of model kits, particularly airplanes, is even more impressive. Domestic and Japanese kits crowd the shelves, and range from beginner's snap together sets to advanced finely detailed paint and glue models. Those looking to recapture their childhood will like throwback kits that include Weird-ohs and George Barris custom car reproductions. If assembly required is not your thing, there's a healthy stock of die-cast items, including large collections of Hot Wheels and Johnny Lightning, as well as slot cars, model rockets, and a crafts section. This is an ideal place to while away a Saturday morning, spending the proceeds from lawn cutting, paper delivery, car washing, or lemonade selling.

BEST REAL ESTATE AGENT

Pam Schwartz

925-258-5826, BayArea61.com

The current real estate market in the Bay Area is just about as complicated and frightening a system as ever there could be. Houses can hit the market and sell in hours, thanks to lower prices and salivating opportunists. For the feast or famine nature of the East Bay housing scene, you must have a native guide who is as tough as nails. Pam in Schwartz can be as friendly or

as hastin as you want her to be. Shna your attank dog, your crack research team and your schr-sower all at once, able to get the straight dope on Dat old Victorian you saw for sain in Oakland or the stucco charmer you lusted after in Wal nut Creek. Pam knows that buying and selling East Bay real estate is a disciplinn of unmedia ey bit also one franghi with peril. She pos sesses a unevelopedin knowledge of local real estate laws, so if you want her to play rough with a seller, she can be.dell hem to your will. She's a force to be reckoned with, and if you really want that house today, she's the one to call.

BEST CHEAP COUNSELING

Oakland Center for Holistic Counseling

2901 Harrison St., Oakland. 510-444-3344. JFKU.edu/counseling_centers/locations/oakland/

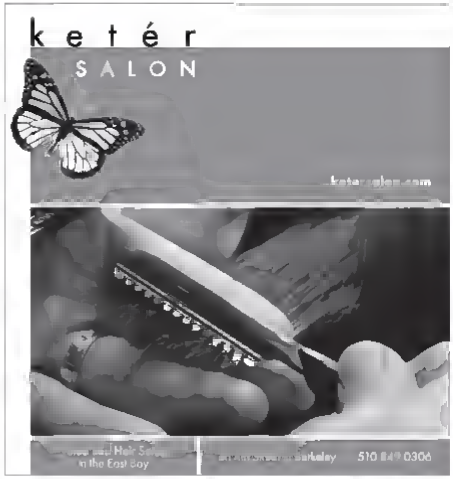
In these tough times, it can sometimes feel like you're a hunt adrift on a raging sea. A listening ear can mean the difference between emotionally staying afloat and disappearing below the water's surface. But counseling can be expensive — sometimes upwards of $150 an hour. So where can you turn? The Oakland Center for Holistic Counseling, run by graduate students at John F. Kennedy University, is a great way to get support at an affordable rate. Opened 28 years ago, the school and top notch counseling center offers individual and group counseling in several areas, including peoples therapy, sexual trauma, libidinal tensions, sexuality, grief, creativity, depression, anxiety and women's and men's issues. And because the staff consists primarily of graduate students who are studying various areas of therapeutic treatment, they cater to all ages — from young children to senior citizens. All patients are charged on a sliding scale based on income.

BEST CHINESE SPORTS MEDICINE

Siu Kee Tang

320 10th St., Oakland. 510-893-3369

Wrenched tendon? Sprained wrist? For centuries, Chinese sufferers have sought relief from such injuries by consulting practitioners of Chinese medicine, who specialize in a sub branch of sports or accident injuries. One of the best clinics, located in Oakland's Chinatown, draws Chinese restaurant workers, high school soccer players and the occasional Hollywood West Coaster, perhaps fresh from a hiking hang up. Run by a father-son team from Hong Kong, the tiny clinic is essentially a one-room fix-it shop, where the patient sits on a stool and



Best Categories We Forgot To Ask

BEST ART GALLERY COLLECTIVE/ARTIST-RUN GALLERY
Mercury 20

BEST BARTENDER
Steve Lefevre

BEST BURGER
Barney's

BEST BURRITO
Gordo

BEST CHARTER SCHOOL
Oakland School for the Arts

BEST DOG PARK
Point Isabel

BEST EVENT SPACE
Periscope Cellars

BEST FINANCIAL PLANNER
Green Retirement Plans

BEST GLUTEN-FREE/WHEAT-FREE BAKERY
Manposa

BEST GROCERY STORE
Berkeley Bowl

BEST ICE CREAM
Fenton's

BEST LAKE
Lake Merritt

BEST (LOAF OF) BREAD
Acme

BEST MOVIE THEATER
Parkway

BEST NEW YOGA STUDIO
Square One Yoga Collective

BEST NEWSSTAND/PLACE TO BUY MAGAZINES
Issues

BEST PERSONAL TRAINER
Amanda Hill

BEST PET SITTING SERVICE
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BEST PLACE TO RUN A 5K
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is tended to while other patients waiting their turn look on interestedly. (There is a screened area if the injury requires removing clothing.) After a careful examination of the injured site, Simon Tang, who speaks English or his Chinese-speaking father will give a vigorous but careful massage, slapping, pummeling, pressing, jabbing, and rubbing the area of injury. Then an aromatic dark paste of Chinese herbs will be laid across the injury and wrapped with a flexible gauze bandage. The opposite of Western medical practices, which advocate immobilization and painkillers, this Chinese treatment is based on increasing blood flow to the injury to speed healing. Patients queue up (no appointments necessary) and plunk down $35 in cash after a treatment. Expect to return multiple times, depending on the severity of the injury. The real bottom line? It works.



Best place to pick up chicks: Mike's Feed and Pet. — Chris Duffey

BEST TOOL REFLEXOLOGY

Ling Foot Spa

7001 Longhorn Way Ste. 6, Pleasant Hill, 925-339-9536

Plop into a deep, comfortable chair that's as big as a throne, let your head drop back on the rushy top of the chair, and rest your arms on its wide arm rests, and a masseur or masseuse will massage your feet with strong hands that have remarkably smooth surfaces. Soothing Chinese music plays, and light plays on the shoji screens. This may be the most pampered, spoiled, decadent, and deserving treat you can purchase for your body. The water is warm, and pleasant, and the feel of the hands on your feet is beyond pleasant; it's nirvana. When certain spots on your feet are tweaked, you'll be amazed to where in your body the energy jumps. This massage goes up the calves and also includes a shoulder, neck, and back massage. Full-body massages are also available.

BEST HOT TUB SCRUB

West Coast Massage

91 Gregory Ln., Ste 6, Pleasant Hill, 925-689-5888

Lie back in the comforting warmth of the bubble-covered water. Feel the underwater jets surge water against you from front, back, and both sides. Overhead showerheads drop a fine warm mist on you also from four sides. They'll adjust the water to the temperature that suits you. At tubside, a masseuse will give you a head and body shampoo. She uses a coarse mitt to really clean you and set you aglow (if the mitt is too coarse, she has a finer one). Your muscles are warm and relaxed; the perfect condition to get a massage. Thirty minutes of this bliss will cost you $68. Prices for a full body massage run from $45 for 30 minutes to $60 for an hour. The masseuses are expert in Swedish acupressure, deep tissue, and Thai massages. It's opposite Michaels. From Contra Costa Boulevard go west, enter the second driveway, park free, and walk around to south end of the building.

BEST FOOT TAX PREPARATION

AARP Tax-Aide

Thirty sites in Alameda and Contra Costa counties, AARP.org/taxaide

From February 1 to April 15, head to one of the thirty senior and community centers, libraries, and churches where the Tax Aide program provides free assistance to seniors and low income persons (those definitions are not rigid). The preparers are experts, and their work is double-checked by a coworker. You'll need proof of identification and birth date; wage and earning statements and interest and dividend statements; and your bank routing number if you want a direct deposit. A copy of last year's federal and state returns would also be helpful. It's by appointment only, and they do not keep you waiting. In their dealings they are cute, direct, and not all oldsters. They make sure you understand they are an your side, but they also make it clear what the law is. Appointments fill up fast, so call early to reserve your space. ●

Readers Say the Darndest Things

BEST POT CLUB

Are you kidding?

What's next, best NA meeting? — *Mills Stark*

BEST SALVAGE STORE

Ohmega Salvage

Lots grunge, higher prices, but the best stuff goes there. — *Lawrence Cronin*

Urban Ore

Like a scavenger hunt whenever you go. — *Holly Le Du*

BEST SPECIALTY RECORD STORE

1-2-3-4 GO!!!!

Where else can I go to get four mohawks cut? — *Reem*

The Musical Offering in Berkeley

The best place to buy classical music recordings. — *John C. Sulak*

BEST USED CLOTHING

Pretty Penny

Amazing selection, amazing prices, amazingly not stuffy. — *Emily Harrison*

BEST VETERINARIAN

Broadway Pet Hospital

They are compassionate and empathetic about the needs of pets. — *P. Meredith*

Grove Way Dr. Hackler

He saved my goat!! — *Martin Moorhouse*

BEST VINTAGE CLOTHING

Down At Lulu's

Cause they have records and a hair salon too! — *John Nemeth*

SUBCULTURES
BEST OF THE EAST BAY 2008

Categories We Didn't Think Of

BEST AFFORDABLE HEALTHCARE/HEALTHCARE PLAN

I'd like to know that one!

— *Iris*

BEST EYELASH EXTENSIONS

Not many around who do quality work

— *Marcia Weldon*

BEST FREE WI-FI

Oakland Public Library

Finally! Wi-Fi is now available at every Oakland library branch. — *Echo Schneider*

BEST NOT TOO TRENDY OR EXPENSIVE THRIFT STORE

Out of the Closet

Our dollar items — 5 dollar shoes (sometimes) (I'm talking Dr. Martens, all!) — can count as going and finding something particular — unlike many used places — Money goes to a good cause — It's pink! — All kinds/cultures of people shopping and working there. — *Charlotte Hollaran Couch*

BEST SECURITY GUARD

Lawrence on 11th Street in West Oakland

— *Rachael Taylor*

BEST STORE NOT OPEN LONG ENOUGH TO GET THEIR DUE RECOGNITION

Mercy Vintage

The best store to open in the last year, bright, beautiful, expertly edited selections, good feelings, great stuff. Would blow them all away if they weren't already miles ahead and open more than a week when voting was going on. — *Tullan Velte*

BEST TATTOO ARTIST/GYNECOLOGISTS/MASSAGE THERAPIST

I don't know about you, but I value excellence in all these professions

— *Little Lisa Chuong*

BEST TOOL STORE

Hida Tool of Berkeley

Hands down the best place for high quality gardening, woodworking, cooking (knives) tools. They're family-owned, helpful and decently priced. — *Shirley Brewin*

PEOPLE & PLACES



Best place to watch the Oakland Fireworks. 37° 47' 30.03" N, 122° 16' 47.59" W — Chris Bulley

BEST URBAN PARK

Middle Harbor Shoreline Park

Middle Harbor Rd. at the end of 7th St., Oakland, 510-272-6810, EBParks.org/parks/middle_harbor

Name a place in the Bay Area where you can hear the lonely tolling of a harbor bell, watch a squadron of pelicans fly by, see San Francisco sparkling Oz-like in the distance, and listen to the crushing, clanging and electronic chirping of ILWU workers zipping around on forklift trucks unloading container ships. Can't? Try Middle Harbor Park. Located smack dab in the middle of Oakland's docklands, the park is a little oasis of Zen-like calm in the midst of the shuffle and hustle of one of the West Coast's busiest ports. The park is a slim strap of green along the water's edge, based on the outline of a huge Navy warehouse that once shipped out supplies to troops stationed all around the Pacific. It is now a restored marsh and wetlands. The soaring picnic area shelters' jagged triangular shapes are a deliberate reminder of the warehouse's old shape. If you tire of gazing out across the Bay, watch huge container ships rumble by and marvel at the carefully choreographed ballet of containers flying on and off their decks. Cast your eyes closer-check out crab fishers on the end of a pier, or hang onto the fence, or just sit there on the dock of a bay legs dangling over railway ties that once carried cars onto a ferries to San Francisco. This park is a must for urban explorers.

BEST URBAN WILDLIFE PHENOMENON

The Beaver Family in Alhambra Creek

Escobar St. between Estudillo and Castro Streets, Martinez

Forget New York's rats and the wild parrots of Telegraph Hill. Martinez has beavers running in the streets. Almost literally. To the seat of Contra Costa County government employees, drunk tank refugees, disgruntled jurors and old-time "Martinezians" wander the downtown streets by day. Although businesses are mostly shuttered after 5 p.m., it's only then you can catch a glimpse of the beaver family that's made its home in Alhambra Creek, which runs through the center of the town where Joe DiMaggio was born. When the city council announced it would be killing the beavers to help alleviate a preexisting flood threat their dam made worse, a candlelight vigil was held on the behalf of the beloved semiaquatic rodents and amnesty was their reward. The city has now sunk hundreds of thousands of dollars into beaver-related maintenance, and the beaver brood is somewhat laughably Martinez's main tourist attraction. The family has a dedicated blog, advocacy group, Wikipedia page and many YouTube videos. Catch a glimpse of the playful nocturnal critters in person at dusk, when they leave their lodge and splash about in the creek.

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FORESTCITY

lastsundaysfest on telegraph

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In the children s area Fun & Games Amusements will be providing a children s entertainment area. Down the street the East Bay Depot for Creative Reuse will be on site making art for children from recycled materials.

Check out our music lineup–some of the best talent in the East Bay is coming to Telegraph and the list is growing every day!

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BEST ENCOUNTER WITH POLKA DANCERS IN THE FOREST

German Tourist Club (aka Oakland Nature Friends)

3115 Butters Dr., Oakland. 510-534-9930. NatureFriendsCorporation.com

The nature lovers and festival enthusiasts of the German Tourist Club, also known as Oakland Nature Friends, have been drinking beer from a big mug partying at noon, and chillin' in the sunshine since 1912. United in a quest to celebrate fresh air and family fun, they dance Ües hiki, and they prove that you don't have to live in the mountains of Bavaria to revel in the age-old quintessentially German tradition of grooving on the forest. You can do it right here in the sun-dappled eucalyptus scented Oakland hills. Visitors are allowed at the alpine lodge most weekends (check the web site, there are some restrictions) but the all ages festivals are where the action is. The next few rauntha bring li nrgarnnlest Einhetfest, and Oktoberfest, where the best seats are in the nap-inducing Adirondack chairs between the outdoor dance floor and the sausage vendor. Break out the lederhosen and the limey, knee socks and come as you are: round up the old folks, and the kids, head for the hills and get your polka on.

BEST FOSSIL HUNTING

Shell Ridge Open Space

1 696 Castle Rock Rd Walnut Creek, WC05Parg

Twelve million years ago the San Francisco Bay was a highland. The hilly regions of Contra Costa County were an ocean. And we've got millions of fossilized clam, oyster mussel and scallop shells embedded in sandstone to prove it. Trudge through any creek in Lamorinda and you'll stumble across some, for a mother lode of fossils, lying among sea-smoothed pebbles as if they'd just washed up on the surf, head to Shell Ridge Open Space and hike Fossil Ridge Fossil Hill, an the Fossil Trail. The region's saber-toothed tigers, mastodons, and camel fossils have already been excavated, so you'll have to hike your late-Cenozoic find from the past in mallusk form. But still it you wont to see your world from a different perspective looking at proof positive that the foothills of the East Bay's tallest peak used to be a seashore, even if your proof is just a clam seen in the dirt, track.

BEST PLACE FOR FANS OF OUTMODED TRANSPORTATION TO OUT-OF-SAN FRANCISCO

Ardenwood Historic Farm

34600 Ardenwood Blvd., Fremont. 888-327-2757 EBParks.org/Parks/Ardenwood

Okay, so the trains at Ardenwood Farm don't deliver the near-vertical plunges or white-knuckle brake lurches of San Francisco's cable cars and you're not going to be able to fantasize about starring in a Race-A-Rond paranoiacal when you get to ring, but if you like a little 19th century charm in your train trip, check out the trains at Ardenwood. The open-air wooden cars are replicas of what used to be a branch of the South Pacific Coast Railroad. They're powered by a pint-sized pilgrim pre-cable car locomotive, a big strong horse. The ten-minute trip through the vegetable gardens, toward the greenery and the working blacksmith's shop, is not really fast nor fun walking, but you get to pet the horse and you get a firsthand view into the 1870s, when rural branch lines without the funds for a steam engine were pulled by horse. (So were some of San Francisco's cars!) This railway does have an engine, and the horse doesn't work every day, so call in advance for the schedule.

BEST PLACE TO SHUNT THE BOYS OUT OF THE HOUSE TO WHATEVER THEIR AGE

Niles Canyon Railway

Niles Canyon Station, 37001 Mission Blvd Niles. 925-862-9063 Sunol Depot 6 Kilkare Rd. Sunol. 925-862 9063. NCRY.org

Steam trains and fire engines have some deep genetic attachment to all humans born with the "Y" chromosome. The Niles Canyon Railway is yet another example proving the rule. Stream train freaks — and there is a surprisingly large number of them about — passively swoon when they come to Niles. The railway's vintage steam and diesel engines run through Niles Canyon, a scenic slash through the Oakland Hills, cross the Alameda Creek several times, rumble over Works Progress Administration Bridges and barrel past a stockyard of new and ancient diesel and steam trains in various states of disrepair. Tickets cost only $11 for kiddies and the disabled. On special occasions the railway buffs in charge get their hands on a real old steam train of the truly massive variety and set it loose on the tracks. There is nothing in the world like listening to the huffing of the train watching, steamy snake belch from the stank, and hearing the train's piercing whistle. When in downtown Niles don't forget to pop in to the Essanay Film Manufacturing Company's cinema, one of the first in the country. This was the studio where Charlie Chaplin made some of his first films, including The Tramp. Remember that scene of him wandering down the railway tracks? That was filmed in Niles!

BEST USE OF ABANDONED RAILROAD TRACKS

Iron Horse Regional Trail

888-327 2757 EBParks.org/Parks/Trails/Iron_Horse

Unless you're General Motors, the death of a railroad line isn't usually a reason to celebrate. However, we might be willing to make an exception for Iron Horse Trail, built on the remains of the San Ramon Valley Branch Line. Built in 1890 by Southern Pacific and abandoned in 1978, the line played a key role in developing central Contra Costa County. After Southern Pacific tore out the tracks, the county bought the land and licensed it to the East Bay Regional Park District for a rail-to-trail conversion. Inside a mostly bucolic green strip through suburban pavement lets you bike or hike along the 24.5 miles from Concord to San Ramon. A plus is that it's BART accessible via the Pleasant Hill and Dublin/Pleasanton stations allowing you the option of a car-free way to the trail and bank again after a one way bike trip. Even though the trail is scheduled to grow to 33 miles stretching from the Suisun Bay to Livermore.

BEST NOTES FROM THE 19TH CENTURY UNDERGROUND

Black Diamond Mines

5175 Somersville Rd Antioch. 888-327 2757 EBParks.org/Parks/Black_Diamond

From the hot Contra Costa hills burnished to a gold by the unrelenting sun, our sun stepping into an old mine shaft gives you a chilling contrast. The Black Diamond Mines are the site of the largest coal mining area in California during the 19th century and sand mining in the 1920s. Weekend mann tours, available by reservation, give a taste of the subterranean life. For a taste of the harshness of the life, hike up one of the underlining Contra Costa hill sides to the long-deserted Rose Hill Cemetery and walk among the graves of two of the lawnspeople who perished from mining accidents, epidemics, childbirth, childhood diseases, and (very rarely) old age. Great house Visitor Center temporarily closed right now for structural reinforcements and widening of the entrance, is unique in that it is located underground inside the old sandstone mine.

BEST PLACE WHERE THE WILD THINGS ARE

Ohlone Regional Wilderness Area

There's not a lot of wildness left in the East Bay. The closest thing around is the Ohlone Regional Wilderness. In this gap between Livermore, Fremont and Pleasanton, the Ohlone is a little known local alternative to driving to the Sierra. Spring is the best time for ramping spaces, decent weather, solitude, greenery, dazzling wildflowers, and running streams which are the only source for replenishing drinking water. The 28 mile Ohlone Wilderness Trail is a strenuous road-free hike up Rose Peak, an impressive mountain measuring just 32 feet lower than Mount Diablo. Along the way you might see animals rarely found in the East Bay: rattlesnakes, mountain lions, turkey, deer, bobcats, golden eagles and... cows? Quite a few of them, actually, in the lowerelevations, excreasing grazing rights and exuding a hint of menace.

SUBCULTURES
BEST OF THE EAST BAY 2009

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Wed Oct 7	5:45PM	6:45PM	Full	8:15PM
Wed Oct 21	5:30PM	6:33PM	Dark	8PM
Wed Nov 4	5PM	6:07PM	Full	7:30PM

READERS SAY THE DARNDEST THINGS

BEST CITY EMPLOYEE

Andrea Youngdahl

Smart, skilled, passionate. — *Kerry Forehand*

Clinton Pugh

City of Oakland, amazing gardener of Frog Park! — *Theresa Nelson*

Courtney Ruby

She uses her brain. — *Kaaleen Cotto*

Jason Patton

Guided the Bike Masterplan. — *Hiroko Kariharo*

Jennifer Copley

Jennifer is the reason Bay Berkeley is awesome. — *Tina Ramos*

Michael Caplan

He deserves a medal for working on economic development against the odds in Berkeley. — *Jonathon*

Robert Bobb

I know, he's not a city employee, but he seems to be the most honest person we've had involved in this whole Deltona disaster. Plus, he'll hopefully be our new mayor in the near future! — *Aaron Scott*

Ron Dellums

When he's working, which isn't of late. — *Lan Raphael*

BEST COLLEGE HANGOUT

Bear's Lair

So glad I'm not in college anymore. — *Margaret*

Blake's

Ughhhh ... the place is fantastic, even though it does bad things to me! — *Camilla Calvert*

Jupiter

Heat lamps! — *Sherri Reeves*

Telegraph Ave.

One can always go outside and will never be under-dressed. — *Monrise Lyles*

BEST COLLEGE PROFESSOR

Robert Reich

So smart and so huggable. — *Jake*

Ronald Takaki — UC Berkeley

Founder of Ethnic Studies, just passed away this month. — *Erica Netzman*

BEST UNKNOWN PARK

Union Point Park

2311 Embarcadero East Oakland, 510-238-3187
WaterFrontAction.org/Learn/Parks/UP.htm

Union Point Park opened in 2005 in easy to miss. It sits on the Oakland side of the Oakland Estuary, close to Coast Guard Island, off of 23rd Avenue. Despite its hidden location — or perhaps because of it — the park's got a lot going on. It's a great place for kids to play and run, for a romantic walk or for some lam meditation. The facilities and structures are new and clean; there's lots of parking; plenty of grassy, open space for sports and enough picnic tables for birthday parties and barbeques. It has a crazy-looking conglomerate statue, "Sgame/Follow Me" honoring twenty Oakland women by Scott Donahue. Kids seem to love the thirteen-foot statue, and there's a big play structure that fits in with the park's overall nautical theme. Nary a hint that this use to be an industrial brownfield, thanks in large part to PGAdesign and Groupe de Dion + Urbana who worked collaboratively to transform this area. There is an odd yet wonderful circular structure where you can walk up to the top and see a view of the estuary. The park is part of the larger Bay Trail.

BEST STAIRCASE UP A WATERFALL

The Cascades, Joaquin Miller Park

3300 Joaquin Miller Rd. Oakland
510-531-9557 OaklandNet.com/JoaquinMillerPark

The East Bay has plenty of dazzling Bay views but just one through a silver-wisp mourning of second-growth redwoods, past a reflecting pool two fountains and a granite waterfall. The Cascades part of the 500 acre Joaquin Miller Park is a 142-step granite staircase that ascends next to the falls. The staircase, divided into flights for easy climbing and multiple vantage points, was built in 1937 and dedicated to California writers. (Joaquin Miller, the park's namesake, was a Midwestern Pony-Express rider-turned California poet.) The waterfall's refreshing gurgle and the mountaineer's-eye view of downtown Oakland may well be antidotes to writer's block, and they're surefire remedies for the malaise of a sweltering summer day. The best view is from the top, where it's easy to jump across the narrow stream to a tiny island and perch on bench-size boulders underneath the Woodminster Amphitheater's art deco columns. From here the cargo ships on the Bay and Marin County's peaks are tiny, so bring binoculars.

BEST MOUNTAIN

Mt. Diablo

37°52'54" N 121°54'51" W 925-837-2525,
Parks.ca.gov?page_id=517

From Livermore to Orinda to Martinez and east to Brentwood, wherever you look up Diablo looks back. It's best when the sun is on the horizon and the light is kind — sunrise is a treat east of it and sunset's best to the west. The humps and slopes and gullies and valleys and outcroppings are accentuated and mellowed. It's a bit craggy and sawtooth on the north; the southern side slopes more gently. The healthiest terrain gives way to trees about midway up and trees give way to rock and dirt higher on. Streams flow, meadows bloom. The thirty-mile Diablo Trail crosses it. Its state park is reached from Mt. Diablo Road off



Best community health center West Berkeley Family Practice — Chris Hurley

of Interstate 680 at Danville. Clouds often form above and sometimes obscure the massive presence. Every few winters it snows on top, and people rush there to marvel at the frozen wonderland, throw snowballs and blow on their hands.

BEST VIEW

Lawrence Hall of Science

Centennial Drive, Berkeley. 510-642-5132. LHS.berkeley.edu

Those without young kids or an odd science obsession may not be familiar with Lawrence Hall of Science, nestled in the Berkeley Hills far above Grizzly Peak and past Memorial Stadium and the Botanical Gardens. Lawrence Hall of Science is UC Berkeley's center for preschool-through high-school science and math education (current exhibit animal grossology.) But it also boasts one of the Bay's best views, the kind of sweeping, heart-stopping vista that makes you wish you'd brought a camera and seriously wonder why anyone would want to live anywhere but the Bay Area ever. You've got Oakland's glimmering high rises to your left, El Cerrito and more at Berkeley's eucalyptus-furred hills to your right, the whale blinking city dawn between and the silver-blue bay and the Golden Gate Bridge straight ahead. Bring a picnic and a date and climb atop Phoenix (LHS's resident life-size fin whale replica) to get cozy and watch the sunset, or have a picnic dinner and

SUBCULTURES
EAST BAY EXPRESS BEST OF THE EAST BAY 2009

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BEST OF THE EAST BAY
BAND SPOTLIGHT

PERFORMING ON THE MAIN STAGE:
MALDROID



RELEASES:
"Oakland Lads Club" (EP September 2007)
"Nevermind" (January 2008)
"Maldroid" (April 2008)

BAND MEMBERS:
Ryan Divin (Vocals)
Johnny Beatus (Guitar)
Todd Godley (Guitar)
Sean "The Talented Mr." Shippley (Bass)
Prince J (Keys and Samples)
Al Riot (Keytar and Synths)

BAND BIO:
Maldroid is a band born in reverse. Tired of the junk videos played on MTV, lead singer Ryan Divine took it making his own. The videos and songs caught on, and before they had even played a live show, the dapper-dressed Maldroid appeared on Good Morning America to accept their YouTube/Cingular Underground "Best Video" award. In true reversal style, Maldroid then set out making live shows as entertaining as their videos they created. A solid year of touring and playing brought them to where they are now: a complete package. An unendingly entertaining, Kinks-inspired live set compliments the stunning, Gondry-inspired videos which compliment the sonically amazing records that can be summed up in one word: "AC/DEVO." The best part? It's all DIY — the recording, the videos, even the band's management all stay far away from the crashing and burning music industry. Charting a new DIY path never sounded or looked so good.

Maldroid has shared the stage with the musical talent of Modest Mouse, The Lovemakers, Jimmy Eat World, Reel Big Fish, Spoon, Paramore, Scissors For Lefty, Jet Lag Gemini, Audrye Sessions, The Matches, International Noise Conspiracy and more.

WEBSITES: WWW.MALDROID.COM WWW.MYSPACE.COM/MALDROID

ally your feet into the fountain while taking it all in. And if you can't make it up the hill, there's a 24-hour live video feed and daily time-lapse (http://u.berkeley.edu/view/) — the best antidote to workday ennui there is.

BEST PLACE TO WATCH THE OAKLAND FIREWORKS

37°47'30.83 N, 122°16'47.59" W

The best place to watch Oakland's fireworks is not in Oakland. It's in the opposite side of the water in Alameda. (Don't worry — the back of fireworks look just as good as the front.) However, before you head for the Webster Street Tube, let's talk about its absolutely worst place to watch the fireworks: the shoreline next to the former Alameda Naval Air Station — too far away from the official fireworks, too close to an injurious array of illegal fireworks set off by drunken pyromaniacs, heedless of life and limb (especially yours). Another too-popular viewing spot is the Wind River corporate grounds — tamer surroundings, but still too far away. Instead, from the Tube, make an immediate right at the first exit (Mariner Square Drive) and follow it as it curves to the right. Three hundred yards past the Mariner Square Athletic Club, look for a guardhouse and, in an unmarked road. If nobody's there — or if you can talk your way past the rent-a-guard — drive in toward the estuary, and you're home free. Otherwise, make a U-turn and park near the athletic club or bus end. Join the milling crowds in Mariner Square, but don't join them. Turn left and slide through a narrow opening just left of the Beery Yacht dealership. You'll find yourself on a huge, sparsely populated parking lot of a former military base. Look for the large anchored in the middle of the estuary, and you'll be right below the exploding spectacular.

BEST PLACE TO WATCH SMALL PLANES AND BLIMPS

Behind the Otis Spunkmeyer Field

Harbor Bay Pkwy, 100 yards off Doolittle Dr, Near Oakland International Airport's North Field

There used to be a superlative place for lounging around to watch small planes, blimps and helicopters coming and going. It was the lobby of the historic art deco hotel at 4536 Earhart Drive on the edge of Oakland Airport's North Field. Amelia Earhart stayed there several times, including the nights before taking off from Oakland on her two ill-fated attempts to circumvent the world. Unfortunately, after years of being open to the public, the old hotel is locked and virtually unused. The front littered with tossed newspapers (keeping in their plastic bags. Until somebody reopens the lobby, there's an outdoor alternative. When wind patterns are right and the airport is using runway #15, you can take a blanket and a picnic to watch small airplanes land and taking off close overhead. And when a blimp is in town, it lifts and lands majestically from and onto the grassy area in front of you. The location is behind the Otis Spunkmeyer Soccer Fields on Harbor Bay Parkway. Ample parking is available.

BEST WAY TO SEE THE BEST 4TH OF JULY PARADE

Alameda Mayor's Fourth of July Parade R.A.C.E.

AlamedaRace.com

Alameda's Fourth of July Parade is renowned in the East Bay and not just for its floats, but also for its *length*. Alameda natives like to joke that half of the island city's 75,000 residents are in it and the other half watch. This may almost be true. It's the second longest July Fourth parade in the nation and the longest parade route at nearly four miles, making it also to a festive death march for its costumed participants. It's not surprising, then, that the parade goes on for hours with the last floats still waiting to take off from Park Street as the first fleets finish at Webster Street across town. Fortunately, for parade-lovers who have lives to get back to and parties to attend, there is a way to see the parade without spending hours in a enthrall cross between Norman Rockwell and Franz Kafka. Sign up for the 5K charity preparade run that follows the parade route. At the end, turn around and start walking back to the beginning. You'll catch the parade mid-route, experiencing it in fast-forward. By the time you're back at the starting line, the final floats are taking off, you've gotten in some brisk exercise, helping the homeless, and you've saved a couple hours of your life.

SUBCULTURES
BEST OF THE EAST BAY 2009

BEST LEAST KNOWN WINE TRAIL

Elliston-Westover-Chouinard Wineries

Elliston Vineyard 463 Kilkare Rd, Sunol, 925-862-2377 Elliston.com, Westover Winery, 34329 Palomares Rd Castro Valley, 510-537 3982 WestoverWinery.com, Chouinard Vineyards 33853 Palomares Rd., Castro Valley, 510-582-9800 Chouinard.com

Tucked inside an almost rural stretch of land between Niles Canyon in Sunol and Castro Valley and located just west of the majority of Livermore Valley wineries Elliston Westover and Chantnard are stops located along secluded East Bay back roads that make for a nice one- to two-hour tasting jaunt. Each of these small wineries buys or grows most of its varietals elsewhere, but offers an occasional wine that is grown directly on its premises and each offers its own specialties that should not be ignored. Elliston Winery (whose elegant tasting parlor is located inside a 19th century mansion — once a sanatorium) has a fine selection of whites, including an excellent Pinot Blanc and full-flavored sparkling wine. After ex

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ploring the grounds follow the road that wends about eight or so miles through Sunol and up Palomares Road to the Spanish style building that houses Westover Winery known for its wide array of very potable ports. Finally, end at the award-winning Chouinard Winery half a mile or so up from Westover and enjoy a myriad full-bodied whites and big hearty reds. The extensive wine tasting menu includes a Granny Smith apple wine that is not to be missed.

BEST HOMELESS ENCAMPMENT

The Shanties of the Albany Bulb

Off Interstate 80 near Golden Gate Fields, Albany

Just a stone's throw from Interstate 80 and Golden Gate Fields racetrack, the Albany Bulb open space plays host to any number of transients who've set up improvised windups among the foliage of the bluff for years. These guys are homeless, yes, but they kind of have it made. With a gorgeous view of the expanse of bay and Marin and a popular beach dog park just down the hill, it's not a bad spot to hang one's hat and bell. It beats most Bay Area rents. Perhaps the best kept secret of the encampment is the bizarre, public-contributed art in the area: a mermaid painted to a benched concrete tube; an amphitheater built from trash remnants and graffiti of all kinds. Many an outdoorsy pot smoker has likely been spooked by the evidence of these Bulb dwellers who are said to be friendly enough in a don't bother-us, we-won't bother-you kind of way. And if you lose your shirt at the track, it may even be worth asking your broker about.

BEST "BOATNIK" MARINA NEIGHBORHOOD

Barnhill Marina

2354 Mariner Sq., Alameda
AlamedaFloatingHomes.org

Call their funky-to-quaint dwellings "houseboats," and the residents of Barnhill Marina will quickly correct you, pointing out that their homes are motorless and can't leave their docks without a tow. They're "floating homes." There's a legal distinction. Each dwelling is only feet away from its neighbor accessible only through common dock "sidewalks." The residents in the 42 floating homes use this closeness to their advantage. They hold holiday parties, barbecues, yard sales and birthdays; help each other with repairs; and when one of their neighbors succumbed to pancreatic cancer, fielded a run/walk team raising money for the American Cancer Society. They stay civilly focused with their regular newsletter. If it sounds like paradise, it's not far off. The neighborhood is quirky and picturesque, wildlife is right at their front doors, and views across the Oakland Estuary are gorgeous. But moving to this watery 'hood ain't cheap. A floating home costs about the same as a landlocked house. Add docking fees and boat upkeep, and the price tag goes up. The neighborly vibe though is priceless.

BEST PLACE YOU CAN'T GET TO WITHOUT RISKING ARREST

READERS SAY THE DARNDEST THINGS

BEST COMMUNITY ORGANIZER

Evelyn Granter, of the Oakland Museum

Pulls together Day of the Dead every year with a mega watt smile and lots of soul. — *Patricia Walsh*

Van Jones

Our Obama. — *Wendy Levy*

BEST COMPANY TO WORK FOR

Blackrock Associates, LLC

Larry mega hersche standing on pool tables. — *Chase*

Crossroads Trading Company

I'm immersed in great fashion everyday AND I get the benefit of promoting a green lifestyle! — *Gino Nouloki*

Give Something Back, Oakland, CA

Hires inner city workers. Gives over percent of profits to local charities. — *Hugh*

MediaNews

Yes, kidding. — *Sara*

Pacifica Radio

You get to be creative in a chaotic and underfunded enterprise. — *Daniel del Solar*

Pixar

Hire me, please! — *Alex Butros*

BEST JUKEBOX

Kerry House or The Hut

Every jukebox is the best jukebox! — *Camille Gebert*

The Kerry House

Digital download, yes ... but they offer Counter Sticks albums. — *Mitch Cardwell*

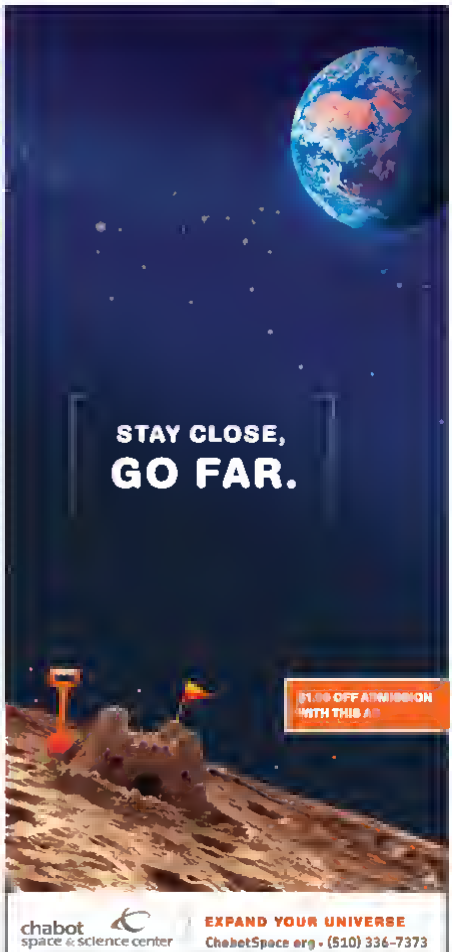
The one in Max's Diner on Shattuck

Every time I walk in, it's hijacked by punk kids playing "Holiday in Cambodia" by the Dead Kennedys over and over for hours. — *Calder Marchmont*

Coast Guard Island

Oakland Estuary

You'd expect anything that locked down to have some pretty cool stuff. The century-old man made island is legally part of Alameda but is accessible by land only by one well guarded bridge in Oakland. You can't pass the guards without a government ID card and a good reason for being there. But wait. With an island there's another way and occasionally someone trees it unwittingly or otherwise. There was the guy who arrived soaking wet after swimming from the main land. When confronted he got belligerent made some inept kung-fu moves, and ended up getting arrested. Hosters sometimes cluelessly land. One guy landed and sunn



tered across the island looking for a store and restaurant. He was questioned, found harmless, and launched back into the estuary. So what's on this Xanadu that's kept so tightly protected? Well, we'd like to tell you it's an island of delight and intrigue, worth the risk of unmooring about that onshore-style military architecture and outdoor art of the anchor-and-cannon sort, you'll be disappointed. Lots of office buildings, a gym, a junior-college-grade cafeteria, a small PX, a ship repair station, rarely used helipad, and a 1.4 mile running track around the circumference of the island are among the high points. If you're lucky, you might see a dog running the canine training obstacle course, but you can probably safely see that just fine with binoculars from the Marina Max docks, 300 yards away along 88a in Oakland.

BEST OBSCURE 1950S BEAT HISTORY SITE

Where "Howl" Was Premiered to the World

2707 Shattuck Ave., Berkeley

Having seen the best minds of his generation destroyed by madness, bus station baggage handler and struggling poet Allen Ginsberg wrote a protest poem with a working title of "Howl for Carl Solomon." He first publicly performed a piece of the unfinished poem across the Bay in October 1955 in a San Francisco art gallery/former gas station. Shortly afterward, Ginsberg moved to Milvia Street in Berkeley and continued to work on this and other poems, sometimes upstairs at Caffe Mediterraneum, a Telegraph Avenue coffee shop that served an exotic, high-powered coffee drink called espresso. Finally, on March 18, 1956, Ginsberg was ready to publicly perform the long poem with a shortened title (and just "Howl").

As described by Gary Snyder, who also read that night, the event took place at "the little theater on Shattuck next to a bowling alley and down the street from a moving company." There the small but rapturous audience surrounded by panoramic drawings of an orgy by painter Robert LaVigne heard the complete "Howl" as well as the premieres of "Sunflower Sutra" and "America." A recording of the event made on a reel-to-reel machine has been in print for half a century and is still considered the definitive audio version of the poem. The entire first edition of *Howl & Other Poems* was confiscated and its publisher arrested for obscenity; the 520 copies of the book weren't released until a judge's acquittal on October 3, 1957.

THE BEST CARTOON HISTORY PILGRIMAGE SITES

The Rocky & Bullwinkle Triangle

1 Former site of JT Ward Real Estate, 3045 Ashby Ave., Berkeley. 2 Alta Bates Hospital, Berkeley. 3 Former site of Bullwinkle Ford, Safeway at College Ave. & Claremont Ave., Oakland

In 1947, World War II veteran Jay Ward arrived in Berkeley to take over a real estate business he'd inherited from his dad and opened an office at Ashby and Domingo below the Claremont Hotel. On his first day at work he stepped out his door to talk with his mail carrier. Little did either know that they'd launch a global juggernaut.



With a runaway lumber truck that was just then roaring down Tunnel Road. The driver seeing a red light at Claremont Avenue swerved to the right, crashing into Ward's front porch and nearly killing both men. 2. As Ward recuperated in Alta Bates Hospital, a visiting fraternity buddy, Alex Anderson, suggested ditching real estate and making cartoons for this new medium, TV. 3. Later, when they needed a name for a big dumb moose, Ward remembered the sign on a car dealership a few blocks down Claremont Avenue, "Bullwinkel Ford."

BEST OFF THE BEATEN BAY AREA LEGEND

The Oakland Cranes

Port of Oakland

How many visitors and new residents have been told this one? "George Lucas was inspired by those container cranes on the Oakland waterfront when he designed the robotic AT-AT Walkers for *The Empire Strikes Back*." Not only is it oft-told, three are web sites devoted to the story. T-shirts depicting it and even a mention on the Port of Oakland web site. True it sort of makes sense, in a way. Lucas is a guy from the Bay Area, after all. How could he avoid being inspired by those mechanical horses in the sky? We even know that he spent time nearby when filming *THX 1138*, using the Webster Street Tube for a climactic subterranean race scene. But no, Lucas and his people have firmly denied it, and the rumor appeared soon after the movie came out in 1980. No. Nope. Isn't true.

BEST ART CONTEST

Alameda's Sand Castle and Sand Sculpture Contest

Robert Crown Memorial State Beach, Otis and Westline Drive

It's fun to play in the sand, and that's what Alameda's Sand Castle and Sand Sculpture Contest is all about. An Alameda tradition for 43 years with only the promise of ribbons and trophies as prizes, the free annual event at Robert W. Crown Memorial State Beach can attract some serious artists, but it's also pure fun for families and kids. The modern-day Michelangelos sculpt with shovels, hoes and spatulas. For their base forms, they can use flowerpots, milk cartons and buckets. Found natural materials on the beach add embellishments. Out of sand and water the craftsmen create amazingly detailed replicas of local landmarks, such as the Posey Tube, or models of world wonders like the ancient pyramids or Mayan temples. Sea creatures, monsters and wildlife wend their ways into their subject matter. A kelp-haired mermaid

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READERS SAY THE DARNDEST THINGS

BEST K-12 TEACHER

Bob Alhayde, Stanley Music School

No one person has been more responsible for the creative development of young musicians. — *Adam Tejada*

Russell Wright

He gets kids to soar to places that they didn't know they could go. — *Brett Sharrow*

BEST LOCAL INNOVATOR

Anantha Pradeep

He's applying cutting edge Neuroscience to revolutionize marketing and Advertising — his company is Neurofocus. — *Melissa Baumgard*

Oaklandish

Makes you feel good about Oakland even though it's a mixed up, dangerous city. — *Alec Bashaw*

BEST NEW CAUSE

Atheism

— *Guyanne Coffee*

Believing the city budget

— *Barbara Gabel*

Buy Local

I would have picked the Parkway Theater until they pewed their incompetence by closing the Cerrito too. — *Carolyn Kedda*

Green Jobs

— *Sarah*

I Like the Parkway

— *Camilo Landau*

Keep the Air in Oakland

— *Angela Tang*

Marriage Equality

Well, not "new" exactly, but about damn time. — *Lena*

Owner Grant

— *Kesha Ho*

Please brush your teeth, people.

— *Bobby Jean*

wearing seaweed scales may be next to a life-size Buddha. Or an open-mouthed hippo may rest adjacent to an enormous serpent slithering through sea grasses. Sand castles run from rudimentary pail-shaped and round-mounded things by the kids and families to the great architectural marvels with turrets moats and drawbridges. All the masterpieces are constructed at the water's edge at low tide so after the judging, the sea sweeps the creations away forever.

BEST COMMUNITY GARDEN

Alameda Point

Community Garden Co-op

Alameda 510-868-7839

If you're looking for a community garden that's bigger than mere spaces on the ground, check out the Alameda Point Community Garden Co-op. Founded by a nonprofit collective that works to end homelessness, the group uses vacated property on the former Alameda Naval Air Station to provide housing and job training to hundreds of homeless East Bay residents. The garden itself is managed and maintained by the Growing Youth Project, a group of young people from the community who tend areas around the garden beds: farm the peripheral areas, raise chickens and bees, and put together boxes of fresh fruits and vegetables for Alameda Point Collaborative residents. Garden plots are available to anybody on a first-come, first-served basis. Herbs, strawberries and ground cover dot the landscape around and in between the beds. Every few months, manager Kale Camile holds a garden party for community garden volunteers to weed the area, amend soil and share a potluck lunch. It's a good time to jump in the Growing Youth Project kids for tips on how to make the most of such space.

BEST COLLECTION OF CRAFTSMAN BUNGALOWS

Near Downtown Martinez

These American classics with Parthenonic proportions solid dimensions and fine details went up between 1905 and 1920. The Craftsman era. They're along Alhambra Avenue near the high school and further north on Alhambra and adjacent streets and around the junior high school. All bungalows don't have all of the typical features but look for low pitched roofs, wide overhangs with visible rafter ends, faux elbow joints appearing to support roof beams, fine details, square columns resting on the ground and tapering in and up to above the porch floor supporting the roof columns. Narrow windows flank a wide window. The conspicuous of the small attic windows and the higher prospect of the larger window form a notch; one of the wonderful details. Small panes often appear in the tops of the windows. Almost all of these beauties remain as designed and built, perhaps a combination of their durability and the owners devotion and aesthetic sense.

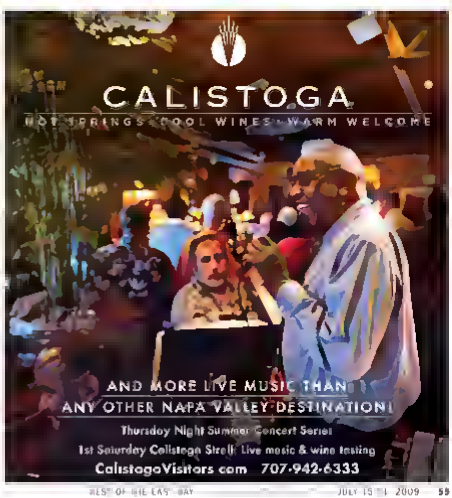
BEST ARCHITECTURAL REPURPOSING

Mua Lounge

2442a Webster St., Oakland, 510-236-1100, MuaOaklandcom

What to do with a cavernous old auto building when the industry moves elsewhere? Why, turn it into an art-filled restaurant, of course. With the decline of the domestic auto industry, Mua may very well become the template for creative repurposings on Broadway's Auto Row. Now a hip restaurant/bar/lounge featuring resident DJs and bittersweet squash mac-n-cheese, Mua was once Oakland Rare and Wheel. Owner Hsiuk Dong made the smart decision to retain the look and feel of the old shop, keeping the concrete walls where Dong's own paintings (of what appear to be troubled horses)





now hang. The high ceilings and open space work to the restaurant's advantage, conveying a grandeur that can't be matched by a more conventional restaurant space. The old "Oakland" M & N" signage remains on the building's front, juxtaposed next to the restaurant's slick new graffiti lettering.

BEST CROWDED LIBRARY

Asian Branch Library, Oakland Public Library

388 9th St., Ste. 190, Oakland, 510-238-3400, OaklandLibrary.org/Branches/asian.html

The central Chinatown location of this branch of Oakland libraries means lots and lots of visitors, including probably five generations of folks, from the elders reading newspapers to kids running amok. On any given day — well, except Sundays, when all neighborhood branches of the library system are closed — you'll see a group of people gather outside the door, waiting for it to open. The library staff is super nice and helpful, whether you're looking for Mandarin stories on tape or some hard-to-find Vietnamese books. Its offerings include materials — books, magazines, newspapers, DVDs, CDs, tapes — in at least eight Asian languages. Of course, you can request anything from the other branches, too. The library is a crowded, but unique spot that shows the diversity of Chinatown, and conveniently located on the first floor of the Pacific Renaissance Plaza. With the recently added benches around the plaza's fountain, it's become even more of a cultural hub, with the nearby restaurants and shops and a cultural center upstairs.

BEST PLACE TO IMPROVE YOURSELF

Piedmont Adult School

800 Magnolia Ave., Piedmont, 510-596-2855, PiedmontAdultSchool.org

Want to brush up your conversational French? Conquer your fear of public speaking? Learn to belly dance, cook Thai vegetarian, or make beaded jewelry? You can do all that and more at Piedmont Adult School, which offers evening and weekend education on several Piedmont school campuses. Local experts develop and teach classes on an enticing array of topics, and the low-key atmosphere is both a boon to learning and a delightful antidote to everyday stress. Courses run from one day to ten weeks, a level of commitment that's manageable for most working people, and the enrollment fees are within the reach of most nonworking people — so get up there and expand your job skills in a computer class. Lead-footers can even clear things up in the DMV-licensed traffic violator program, after all. If you have to do traffic school, you might as well do it in scenic Piedmont. And, while some classes entail homework, there are never any grades.

BEST COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTER

West Berkeley Family Practice

2031 Sixth St., Berkeley, 510-704-8000, LifeLongMedical.org/centers_berkeley_family.html

West Berkeley Family Practice is a throwback to an earlier era when mom, dad, and



Best staircase up a waterfall: The cascades at Joaquin Miller Park. Chris Dudley

kids all saw the family doctor for general health and wellness. Part of LifeLong Medical Care, a group designed to act as a safety net for the underinsured and low income, the clinic specializes in family medicine and takes patients on a sliding scale based on their income. Services offered include family planning and prenatal care, specialist referrals, child immunizations, brain counseling, screenings, evaluations and lab screenings. With rising healthcare costs, West Berkeley Family Practice is a solid alternative for meeting basic and preventative health needs, and the handling of patients and quality of care surpasses many for-profit clinics.

BEST SCROUNGING SPOT FOR LITERARY DUMPSTER DIVERS

El Cerrito Recycling Center

7501 Schmidt Ln., El Cerrito, 510-215-4350
Ci.Cerrito.org/recycling/centerhtml

The terms "recycling center" and "literary community" are rarely found in the same sentence — or on the same half-acre — but if you venture all the way up Schmidt Lane in El Cerrito, and if you've got any lucky timing at all, you're likely to find the two come together. Turning off San Pablo Avenue toward the hills, you'll pass through a sedate residential neighborhood, marred only by the row of power lines climbing adjacent Maeser Avenue, until you reach the end of the road. Tucked back against a steep, barren patch of the hills in what looks like an old rock quarry (although it claims to be a City of El Cerrito "Nature Area") is the Recycling Center, here in a narrow nest to the bins of metals, plastics, and glass is a collection of bookshelves surrounded by a passel of bookworms. They arrive by bicycle, car, and sometimes even by foot, eagerly picking off page through and discussing the textual comings and goings. Be polite, be cool, be well-read, and you should come away with good literary loot. Beware of the shorten Daylight Saving Time hours.

READERS SAY THE DARNDEST THINGS

BEST PICK-UP SPOT

Depends on what you're looking to pick up.
— Christo

Dog Park
— Barbara Selfridge

Ruby Room
I got a lap dance there once. *— Princess Cagley*

Whole Foods
Check out those parallels, yeah. *Benjamin Thompson*

BEST PLACE TO TAKE THE KIDS

Diamond Park & Canyon
Hard to find creek in the middle of a city where you can walk on rocks in a creek and see hawks learning how to fly overhead. *— Hugh*

Tilden Park
Little trains, merry go rounds, lawns to roll down (at the Brazilian Room). Little Farms, swimming holes, and miles of country to wander through. What's not to like? *— Jon Frech*

BEST NONPROFIT EVENT

Walk in the Wild at the Oakland Zoo

9777 Golf Links Rd., Oakland, 510-632-9525, OaklandZoo.com

Taking the kids to zoo for a picnic makes for a fun day, but wouldn't the zoo be even more fun if adults sans kiddies could sip wine and cocktails, nosh on nibbles from some of the East Bay's best restaurants and even dance with the stars next to the flamingos? That's exactly what Walk in the Wild allows. Presented by the East Bay Zoological Society, Walk in the Wild is the zoo's annual adults only fund-raising event to produce money for zoo conservation education and animal enrichment programs. For the past seventeen years, the zoo has thrown open its gates on a late afternoon in June for an ever increasingly popular fete that lets patrons laugh with the inmates, party with the primates, and talk to the turtles until dark. More than ninety vendors — wineries, breweries, restaurants, caterers, and bakeries — line the pathways as the zoo allowing animal lovers to snack and imbibe next to that "three animal years ago we might have had a dozen members at a typical meeting. Lately we've had more than 50 with at least 100 members actively keeping bees."

BEST EAST BAY EXTREME PET FAD

Alameda County Beekeepers Association

AlamedaCountyBeekeepers.vox.com

Poisonous snakes and gythons, potbelly pigs and piranhas — thinextreme pets of the past look so dated now. How about this? A pet that has remained as stubbornly feral as it was when prehistoric humans first tried taming it. A pet that will routinely attack even its owner with a suicidal viciousness one that easily escapes confinement and kills people around the world every year. Now multiply that one pet by about 100,000 — that's what owning a beehive means. Yet despite that, or maybe because of it, the honeybee seems to be this year's fastest growing extreme pet. William Smith, president of the Alameda County Beekeepers Association, says

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Janus Networks

TechCrunch Brings Dream of 'Dead Simple' Web Tablet to Life

by Mielle Sullivan, Janus Networks

In July of last year, Michael Arrington posted on TechCrunch that he was tired of waiting for someone to produce a simple web tablet computer for "touch computing." So he asked readers to help him build one. Now, a year later, the blog is on the verge of announcing how to get your hands on just such a tablet. Not bad for people that until now have only written about devices.

The original idea was simple: a thin, light computing tablet with the sole function of surfing the web. A single physical button would power on and off the device. All other interaction would be done through a touchscreen. When turned on the device would go directly to Firefox. The price goal was $200 and originally the end product was to be open sourced to "let anyone build one that wants to."

Well, Firefox was nixed in favor of Webkit based browser and the cost will be closer to $299, about the same as the Kindle 2. But the CrunchPad, as the tablet is now called, does indeed exist — in a very proprietary form. Presumably it will be sold by a company spun off from the blog.

The near-finished Crunchpad is 16mm thick with a 12 inch full color touchscreen encased in aluminum. Exact details of the other specs will be released in a press event later this month or early August, but presuming it is like the previous prototype it will have: a 1024x768 resolution screen, 1GB RAM, 4GB flash drive, a camera, speakers, four cell battery and will be powered by a Via Nano processor. The whole thing will weigh about three pounds.

The Crunchpad is an interesting development in consumer electronics, aside from being born from a blog. It competes on one level with netbooks, laptops, the Kindle and the iPod touch. Essentially it's a netbook with bigger screen, no keyboard and no internal storage. For a lot people, as all they need. For web browsing, it works just as well as a laptop. The CrunchPad is web dependant, while Kindle functions entirely off of internal memory, but it is as portable as the Kindle, and in full color. Apple is rumored to have a tablet computer in the Pipeline, but it's a safe bet the cost will be more than $299. It will be interesting to see if the sleek, simple CrunchPad can compete with Apple, Amazon and Dell.

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Thanks to East Bay Express!

Created and produced by NTA Events, AIDS/LIFE Founder/Producer Craig R. Hillas, ©NTA Events, 2009



Best way to see the best Fourth of July parade. Do it backward Chris Duffey

their favorite critter: be it sun bear, lion, tiger, elephant or alligator. At this party, the adults can be kids again, jostling for the best spots in line for the sky ride and train — all in the name of animal conservation.

BEST PARK FOR CRITTER WATCHING

Anthony Chabot Regional Park

9999 Redwood Rd., Castro Valley, 888-327-2757
EBParks.org/parks/anthony_chabot

At 5,000-plus acres, Anthony Chabot Regional Park stretches from Castro Valley to the Oakland Hills, which makes it prime territory for critters and critter watching. The miles of meandering trails mean visiting Dr. Doolittles saunter right through these animals' grasslands, chaparral and eucalyptus groves and have a perfect opportunity to observe their fluffy, furry, feathered friends up close. Look up to see meadowlarks, sparrows, hummingbirds, mockingbirds, finches, vultures and hawks. Look down to spot lizards, snakes, and turtles. Look all around to see crafty squirrels, skittish rabbits, dart-ing foxes, cautious deer, a trotting coyote, maybe a bobcat. Notice the butterflies

READERS SAY THE DARNDEST THINGS

BEST PLACE TO WORSHIP

The Apple Store

I actually never go to the place myself, but some people seem to go there a lot" — *Aaron Scott*

Berkeley Bowl

I pray to fruit and they have a great selection. — *Margo Rivera-Weiss*

Center for Transformative Change

It doesn't matter whose god you're looking for. — *KSC*

Temple Beth Abraham

Rabbi Mark Bloom is hilarious and has some great, innovative services like "Rock 'n' roll Shabbat" — *Sarah Denly*

Tilden Park

All the others are suburban — *Andrea Sojer*

BEST RISING POLITICAL FIGURE

Attorney General Jerry Brown

I know, he's risen and fallen a few times already, but he's going to be running for governor next time around, so I think he applies. Oakland hasn't seen a better civil servant in years, and the only really honest mayor we've had in goodness knows how long. — *Aaron Scott*

Rebecca Kaplan

Van Jones has jumped the political shark. — *Justin Horner*

— the true test of a great study spot — there are plenty of outlets strung from the sofa's many potted trees. At the cornerof Shattuck and Hearst. It's just two blocks away from the west side of campus but fan enough away that you won't run into every classmate half-mad and farmin bookcup in yourselfdied and overcaffinated stnin. There's even outdoor seating for when you break down and need a stress cigarette. It really just can't get much better.

BEST PEOPLE WATCHING

Any Bus Ride on AC Transit

ACTransit.org

AC Transit is kind of like a person showing up at a surprise party or a traveling circus. You never know quite when it'll show up but when it does it's damn good entertainment. Laughably unreliable schedules notwithstanding (and besides the fact that it's greener than driving, cheaper than BART and faster than walking) AC Transit is worth taking simply for its abnormally hilarious horrifying and head-scratching people watching. Often all public transportation is the great equalizer and if we're talking subcultures, these Belgian beauties host the full spectrum of East Bay archetypes all crammed together in one plum. Though any seasoned rider will tell you that AC is chock full of crazy 24 hours a day there's a noticeable method to the madness. During the day you tend to get your monkeyheads your conspiracy theorists your gossiping high school kids your Cal students your seasonal citizens, and your guitar playing hippies — generally anyone who wouldn't have a place to live in the late afternoon and evening. Newspaper-reading professionals fill the seats and latenat night the crowd is a little sketchier and decidedly drunken. No matter when you go though, it's certain to be some of the best people watching $2 can buy.

BEST PLACE TO STUDY

Berkeley Espresso

1900 Shattuck Ave Berkeley 510-868-3676

Countless papers and projects have been fueled by Berkeley Espresso's coffee. And no wonder. The place is pretty much the Platonic ideal of a great study cafe down to the smallest details.

The wi fi is fast, the staff is always friendly but never aggressively so, the food is uncomplicated and substantial, the bathrooms are surprisingly clean, the classical music is unobtrusive, and the cafés au lait are transcendent. You'll never get a dirty look for staying long after you're done with your drink. It's open till eleven and



honeybees and hornets. See the grazing cows with their gawky calves, the goats and horses that hang nearby. The dark brush, owls, skunks and opossums. The best part about this wild kingdom is that it's just minutes away from home and immediately accessible.

BEST HOPE FOR THE PLANET

Steven Chu

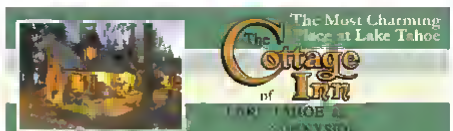
The Bush White House was ridiculous for politicizing science. The administration was full of political hacks who not only denied the existence of global warming, but questioned the theory of evolution. Thankfully, the election of Barack Obama has changed all of that. And the choice of Energy Secretary Steven Chu provides definitive proof that the new president has returned science to its rightful place. The former UC Berkeley professor and head of the Lawrence Berkeley National Lab who won a Nobel Prize for physics also represents our best hope for finally addressing global warming at the federal level. Chu is a strong believer and advocate for green energy technology, from wind and solar powered electric cars and biofuels. So fan he has used his lofty pulpit to issue strong warnings about the many dangers of greenhouse gas emissions. And as head of a federal department with access to $39 billion in stimulus funds, he has already begun to steer national en

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Thursday 1 p.m. Building the Progressive Majority in the Age of Obama

Thursday 4 p.m. Conversation on the Left: Building the Left and the Progressive Majority

Thursday 7:30 p.m. Building Socialism in the 21st Century: An International Evening

Saturday 9 a.m. a Breakfast with International Guests from South Africa, Venezuela, Germany, France, Vietnam, El Salvador and Palestine.

Saturday 7:30 p.m. an Evening of Solidarity with Vietnam

CAPITALISM in CRISIS: Socialism for the 21st century

Thursday July 23 2009

A symposium sponsored by the Committees of Correspondence Educational Fund

Whittemb Hotel 1231 Market Street San Francisco begins on 1:00pm

BUILDING THE PROGRESSIVE MAJORITY AND A SOCIALIST FUTURE

8th National Convention of the Committees of Correspondence for Democracy and Socialism

Fri–Sun, July 24–26, 2009

A weekend of workshops and discussion on strategies for building the progressive majority, the left and the future of socialism. International speakers representing the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, the South African Communist Party, the Party of the European Left and the FMLN Government of El Salvador will be present. A wide variety of Civil Rights, Labor, and community organizers will participate in both the workshop and panel discussions. Speakers representing the U.S. Left include members of the Committee of Correspondence for Democracy and Socialism, the Freedom Road Socialist Organization, the Communist Party USA, Solidarity, and the Democratic Socialists of America.

Registration is $50 for all four days - July 23 to 26 - and includes the Symposium sponsored by the CCDS Education Fund. The daily fee is $20. For low income, youth, and students, $5 per day. For a full list of speakers and the complete schedule of the symposium and convention go to www.cc-ds.org, or email convention@cc-ds.org, or call 415-863-6637

BEST ENVIRONMENTALIST

Van Jones

Van Jones represents a paradigm shift in the environmental movement. Throughout the 20th century the almost typical American environmentalist was a scruffy backpacking pro-bono lawyer who fought to protect scenic rivers, unspoiled forests and endangered species. But with the advent of the global warming crisis, Jones has helped usher in a new era combining environmentalism with social justice. Franz Jones' perspective on the urgent need to change from a fossil-fuel-based economy to one that thrives on green technology also provides an opportunity to revitalize ann nrban nnnters. The Oakland activist has been a fnrce ads-acain of social justice nnnns for years, founding the Ella Baker Center for Human Rights in the 1990s. And in 2007, he launched Green fnr All, recognizing that low-incnmn nrban workers should be trained for renewable energy jobs. Last fall, his book, *The Green Collar Economy*, became a bestseller. And then earlier this year, he joined the Obama administration as the president's "special adviser for green jobs, enterprise, and innovation." As a Washington, DC, insider and an adviser to Obama, Jones now has the ability to effect true change. It's a far cry from being a community organizer in Oakland. But if Jones is successful, he can do more to help his city and many others than he could ever do from here — while helping fight global warming at the same time.

BEST HOPE FOR OAKLAND

Robert Bobb

Earlnn this year, former City Manager Robert Bobb strongly indicated that he planned to move back to Oakland and run for mayor in 2010. But even since, he has remained mute. Was he teasing us? Did he change his mind after the feds dropped them investigation of ex-state Senate leader Don Perata? Or is he just too damn busy saving Detroit public schools? According to news reports from the Motor City, Bobb has been a one-man buzz saw there. As financial czar of the most troubled school district in the nation, he has routed out corruption, helping get nne high-ranking official indicted, while exposing numerous instances of theft and wrongdoing by public employees. Plus, he has played hardball with the local unions, laying off about 1,000 teachers and closing 25 schools, thereby saving the nearly bankrupt district $170 million. In other words, Robert Bobb is perfect for Oakland. He's a no-nonsense leader who is unafraid of making enemies while doing what needs to be done. Plus, there's no one else on the local political scene who can match his hands-on executive experience. Certainly not Perata, a politician who always puts his friends and donors first. The only question is — will Bobb run? At this point it looks as if he needs some coaxing. How about a Draft Robert Bobb for Mayor campaign?

BEST NET RADIO HERO

Pandora's Tim Westergren

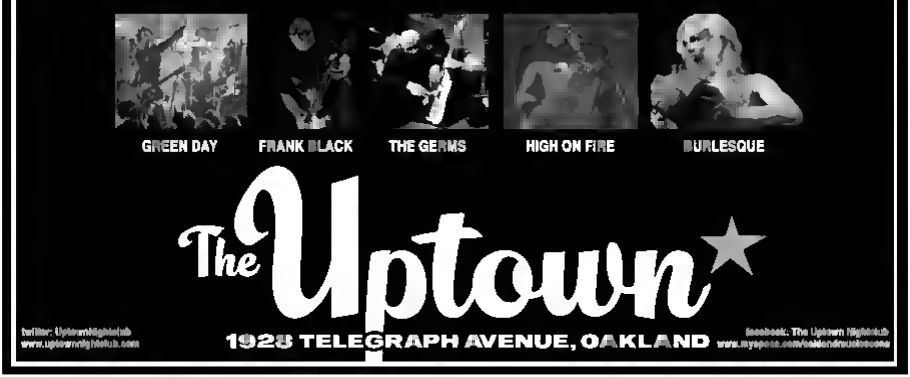
Pandora.com

The future of Internet radio looks bright on the air, in a huge way to the tireless efforts of Pandora's Tim Westergren, champion of independent artists and darling of indie record labels. The rank stor of web radio, Westergren deserves praises on high as the de facto spokesman in the years-long battle against exorbitant and unfair music royalties Internet radio stations are forced to pay for webcasting sound recordings as required by the Copyright Royalty Board. The nnt radio industry leader, Oakland-based Pandora is a web radio station that lets users create personalized radio stations through the Music Genome Project, technology that recognizes similarities and patterns in music. To stave off the predatory fees and to save Internet radio, Westergren mobilized a movement, resulting in millions in political donations, ads on activist blogs, and listeners' letters to produce a massive grassroots lobbying onslaught on Capitol Hill that paid off in Congress. Some sticking points remain on the royalty rates issue, but just this summer President Obama signed the Webcaster Settlement Act of 2009, which gives webcasters like Pandora and certain other broadcasters and webcasters more time to continue negotiations for an equitable settlement with the recording industry and copyright holders.

BEST HIGH SCHOOL TEACHER

Bill Pratt at Berkeley High School

It's an all too-common misconception that high school can either be substantive or interesting — never both. But Bill Pratt is here to show who's figured out how to do it right. "There's a whole new way of thinking about rigor," he says. "I genuinely believe that the deep ideas and the essential questions and dilemmas of any discipline can be taught in a meaningful and accessible way to students of any level." Pratt, who has been teaching history in Berkeley High's Communication Arts and Sciences program for more than a decade, encourages his students to understand history as a living, breathing thing by assigning projects that



engage a variety of different learning styles and value critical thinking, creativity and analysis over rote memorization. So instead of asking kids to split out as many facts and dates as they possibly can on a multiple-choice test, he'll assign an illustrated analogy comparing the 1920s and the 1930s, an in-depth role-play about whether the United States should have dropped the atomic bomb during World War II. What's more, he's managed the same balancing act in his relationships with students, making himself relatable and accessible — by staying late after school to help them with projects, by keeping in touch with alumni through Facebook, by burning CDs of his beloved Clash for particularly punk-obsessed pupils — without sacrificing any of his command of the classroom. With teachers like Pratt around, we'll never have to choose between rigor and relevance.

BEST INSPIRATION FOR ACTIVE SENIORS

Jack Ball at Berkeley YMCA

At 69, Jack Ball has more ass-kicking athletic energy than many people half his age — and is inspiring other seniors to share his enthusiasm for fitness. Ball, who has run several marathons and completed more triathlons than he can remember, taught PE at Berkeley's King Middle School for 33 years before retiring in 2006. He then got his personal training certificate with the intention of becoming a trainer at the downtown Berkeley YMCA, but he soon found himself more interested in leading one of the gym's many senior fitness classes. "I like to say that it's exactly what I used to do at King, except I don't take roll, I don't have to grade them, and I don't have to nurse what ailment they're wearing," he says with a laugh. You can find him teaching Senior Strength Training every Tuesday and Thursday from 9:30 to 10:30 a.m. — no fifty yards ahead of you at your next triathalon.

MOST BEAUTIFUL PLACE TO SPEND ETERNITY

The Chapel of the Chimes

4499 Piedmont Ave., Oakland, 510-654-0123
LifemarkGroup.com/Oakland

There was a time when family burial plots were prized holdings shared between generations. But as modern families have scattered and burial alternatives such as cremation have gained popularity, a sunny patch of hilltop may no longer be your first choice for final rest. Cremains can be shot into space, compressed into man-made diamonds, or scattered by survivors at a meaningful location. But if you're looking for a unique place to rest your ashes, a place that will invite family and friends to quietly contemplate the greatness of you, there are few columbaria more striking than Oakland's Chapel at the Chimes. Founded in 1909, the structure was rebuilt and expanded in 1928 according to designs by John Morgan. The labyrinth of alcoves, niches, columbaria, portals, stairwells, courtyards, chapels, and indoor gardens is augmented by natural illumination that streams through skylights and stained glass windows. The nooks are lined with glass-enclosed cubbyholes that host boxes, urns, and less lush volumes, each holding the final chapter of a decedent's life story. It's a combination of Harry Potter's Hall of Prophecies, the Clue game board, and the Winchester Mystery House. The columbarium's gothic ornamentation is juxtaposed with airy mausolea in spaces of white walls, fountains, and minimal decoration. The mausoleum's most renowned name is that of filmsman John Lee Hooker, who rests in the Garden of Ages on the building's third floor. Chapel of the Chimes hosts the annual Garden of Memory walk through and jazz at the Chimes concert as well as monthly docent-led historical tours. The building is open daily to the public and provides a tranquil and reflective sanctuary amid Oakland's lively urban buzz.

BEST STAINED GLASS WINDOWS

First Presbyterian Church of Alameda

2061 Santa Clara Ave., Alameda, 510-522-1477
AlamedaChurch.com

According to an article in the *Oakland Tribune*, Alameda has more stained glass per capita than any other city in the United States. One local aficionado has photos of stained glass from more than 1,500 related Victorians on the island. Alameda's Twin Towers Methodist Church gets a solid honorable mention for its classic stained glass, but is edged out by First Presbyterian Church, which has so many old school windows that they "may distract a viewer from other fine architectural details," according to the city's Historical Advisory Board. They were recently restored to their eye-rattling brilliance and ten out of fourteen panels depict the life of Jesus from his early ministry through his death and beyond. Check them out some sunny Sunday morning.

BEST CONVERTIBLE CHURCH

Marmot Mountain Works

2098 Adeline Street, Berkeley

"Orthodox" means "correctly believing," and Eastern Orthodox Church architecture is pretty... well orthodox. Then there's altar invariably faces east, and an elthinside of it are arms so that from heaven (on a Google Earth satellite) the church looks like a giant cross. And finally, of course, there's an onion-shaped dome at the top, a practical design in Russia where they discovered that a standard-shape dome collected a frightening amount of snow but a more decorative in the Last Days. So you can imagine its leader rolling in his grave — or rising from it — at the sight of the Marmot Mountain Works in Berkeley. Once the home of a congregation that moved on, the church building has been disassembled and handed over to the moneychangers. Rather than looking within for spiritual comfort, this church now invites its worshippers to bask (and hike and ride a road ramp and run) outside preferably with needlest outdoor gear.

BEST CHURCH NAME IN THE TWILIGHT ZONE

Twin Towers United Methodist Church

1411 Oak St., Alameda

Members of the Twin Towers United Methodist Church must have begun seriously regretting their church name sometime around September 11, 2001. In the late 1970s two Methodist congregations merged into one at this location. The combined group chose a new name because of the building's twin bell towers, visible at a distance from many spots on the island (at least until a few years ago, when an oversize parking garage went up across Oak Street). It was a beautiful name for a distinctive old building. Then September 11 changed everything for the congregation. Fearing that the "Twin Towers" now conjures the distinctly chilling terrorist attacks in New York City. So it's hard to blame pedestrians walking past the beautiful old church from doing a double-take at the name. However, that's not the spooky thing. If you stop and read the historical plaque on the front lawn, you'll probably do another double-take. Twin Towers, the oldest church in Alameda, was founded on a date that now seems truly portentous: "September 11, 1853." Cue Rod Serling and the creepy music.

BEST STILL CURRENT BERKELEY ORDINANCE TO PRESERVE THE PUBLIC MORALS

Berkeley Ordinance Ord. 557-NS § 10.1918

Public morals in Berkeley seem a thing of the past, but then that's exactly the point of this old ordinance on the books. If you're thinking of owning livestock in the city limits don't let em get you on a technicality: "It is unlawful for any person within the limits of the City to allow any stallion, bull or jackass to be kept in the same enclosure with a mare, cow or jenny except in an enclosure sufficient to obstruct the view of all persons outside such enclosure. Good thing, we're protected from that. ●

READERS SAY THE DARNDEST THINGS

BEST STUDENT CLUB OR GROUP
East Bay Pals

Nancy Nadel can whine all she wants. A multi-ethnic, big hearted, quite cycle, gang that promotes safe, good natured consensual violence? Good fun Oakland! — *Max Allstadt*

Youth Speaks

They did the first White House poetry slam for christsakes. If Jimmy Kaan had been a member in the Boys Community Organizer Category... I have voted for him. — *Paul Williams*

BEST UNDER 21 HANGOUT
924 Gilman St.

Man, when I was underage, this is where I could be found. Dang, I feel old. — *Charlyn Lloss Wagner*

Albany Bowl

Also good for the over-60s. — *Katrina Loppin*

CATEGORIES WE DIDN'T THINK OF

BEST BAY AREA SOCIALITE
Mr. Tony Leong
— Tony Leong

BEST CITY OR TOWN?
OAKLANDnnnn
— Vanessa

BEST CITY WEB SITE
Berkeley
— Sun Fountain

BEST ELECTED OFFICIAL
IDLF
He has a pair. *— Chicken Dinner*

BEST GUERILLA-GARDENER MEDIAN STRIP
40th St. between Adeline and West

Over thirty previous strangers organized the donations, planting and maintenance when the city couldn't handle it. *— L. Finn*

BEST GUY EVER
Sean M. Carey

Drummer for Vitamin Party. Singer for The Introcuffagains. Writer and Voice Actor for Bay Area based online puppet show Animal Trash. Released two albums and was featured on Collision rolls "I spied a spider" and the upcoming Ex boyfriends album. You gotta admit that's a lot of shit. *— Sean Carey*

BEST HUMANITARIAN AWARD OF THE EAST BAY
Not sure who would be in this category
— Ophir

BEST PLACE TO CALL HOME
ALAMEDA!
— Cail Bower

BEST PLACE TO STARGAZE
Chabot Space and Science Center
— Shane McGauerton

PLACE TO KISS
Skyline Blvd.
— Amy Kuvekin

WORST-RESIGNED SURVEY
East Bay Express
Have you ever heard of a drop down menu?? *— Patrick Lamy*

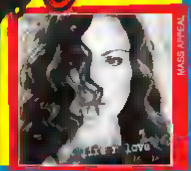

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SUBCULTURES
EAST BAY EXPRESS
BEST OF THE EAST BAY
PARTY
AUGUST 7 • 5 P.M.–MIDNIGHT
OAKLAND MUSEUM OF CALIFORNIA
OUTDOOR VILLAGE
GEARHEAD GARAGE
PERFORMANCE BIKE DEMO
BY GOSPEED
HARLEY-DAVIDSON SHOW
RAT BIKE EXHIBIT
EAST BAY RATS
TATTOO/PINUP ART EXHIBIT
CLASSIC/CUSTOM CYCLE SHOW
LUCKY JU JU PINBALL ARCADE
chabot
space & science center
KIDS ZONE
LIVE MUSIC FROM BANDWORKS MAGIC SHOWS,
ART PROJECTS LEARNING AND HANDS-ON
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THE SOULS OF MISCHEIF
THE HEAVENLY STATES
DIZZY BALLOON
MALDROID
SUPERFINOS VTO
THE THRILL OF IT ALL
C U NEXT WEEKEND (SHAMPU)
MYSTIC RAGE SWANN DANGER
FRACAS 7TH ST. BAND
BUD LIGHT LIME
GREEN ROOM
COMEDY & IMPROV STARRING
W. KAMAU BELL
THARDIWE THOMAS DESHAZOR
PAR THEATRE
STONE SOUP IMPROV
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This second "best of" poetic compilation of songwriting from Greg Brown includes previously unreleased songs and live tracks. At over 30 minutes, *Original City* is a testament to one of the greatest American songwriters of our time.



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Céu's latest album presents more of her sweet, warm n' Seattle sound incorporating soul Hip-hop and electronica, which has made her one of the most talked about global artists in many years.

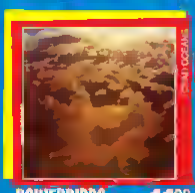


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TINY VIPERS
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BROKEN RECOROB
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NEBULA
Heavy Psych 12.98 CD

Nebula release classic roadshit of heavy riffs, electric blues and psychedelic space rock and extend the band international semblist, returns with *Heavy Psych*, assembling the same authority of the past with the greatness of the present.

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LP available for $14.98.



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Restaurants & Bars



Best chicken and waffles: Tanya Holland's Brown Sugar Kitchen

Photo by Chris Duffey

MOST CONSIDERATE MENU

Spice Monkey Cafe & Restaurant

1528 Webster St., Oakland, 510-268-0170, SpiceMonkeyCafe.com

Sure, the East Bay has vegan and vegetarian restaurants and a gluten-free bakery that caters specifically to those disciplines. But Spice Monkey owner Kanitha Matmury has another kind of model going on at her niche-free restaurant — one that handles mainstream market demands as deftly as vegan, vegetarian and gluten-free needs. She takes special dietary concerns to new heights by offering lots of meat-, dairy-, egg-, beans-, and gluten-free options alongside all the other items on her regular menu. At last count on the often-updated menu, there were twelve vegan dishes (Poppin' Popcorn or warm beets and olives, for instance), twenty vegetarian selections (Soy Cheese Pizza and the Mediterranean a wrap among them) and twenty gluten-free items (slow pork and Sweetness Steak, to name two). When Spice Monkey debuted with homemade dishes using ingredients locally, organically and naturally sourced when ever possible, people loved it. And now, three years later, they love it because Matmury has taken the guesswork out of eating out for vegetarians, vegans and others. Easy-to-read icons instantly designate the relevant dishes, so such diners don't have to quiz the waitstaff repeatedly about Spice Monkey's appetizers, salads, "hand wiches," pizzas, potpies, daily delights, specialties, soups or desserts.

BEST SUSHI JOINT TO TAKE A VEGETARIAN

Manpuku

2977 College Ave., Berkeley, 510-848-2896

The next time you have a serious craving for sushi — and a lunch date with your vegetarian buddy — consider Manpuku. This smallish sushi restaurant in Berkeley's Elmwood District offers a smattering of fish-free *nigiri* (noodles and rolls. There's the standard veggie roll fare — tried (and, truthfully, tired) veggie baseballs like cucumber and avocado rolls — but the menu includes vegetable rolls so delightful in taste and originality that even the biggest fish lover might find themselves ordering a vegetarian *maki* (or two). The Elmwood roll (named for the restaurant's location) is filled with asparagus and shiitake mushrooms and has a sweet and chewy taste and texture. The undeniable gem is the delicious Tropical Maki roll, made with tempura asparagus and mango. While there might be a line for a table or counter seat, it's usually a short one, and it's definitely worth your wait. Aside from fast service (orders are placed before you take your seat), the sushi rolls are so low priced — $2 to $7 — that it's almost like you're dining in a time warp.


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NEW BELGIUM BREWING

BEST BRUNCH PLACE FOR VEGANS AND CARNIVORES TO COEXIST

Venus Restaurant

2327 Shattuck Ave., Berkeley 510-540-5960. VenusRestaurant.net

Brunch is no place for vegans. It's an eggy, cheesy, bacony affair a celebration of animal products of all kinds, from the lox on your bagel to the cream in your coffee. But the typical vegan specific brunch is either a homelessly bland assortment of tofu scrambles done seventeen ways, or it's a glorified and renamed lunch: all sandwiches and salads and savory fare. The Shattuck slow-food giant Venus manages to get it right though: adeptly catering to both omni- and herbivores with its weekend brunch. They've got plenty of meat- and dairy-free options, waitstaff are always willing to make substitutions and suggestions to accommodate vegans and vegetarians, and the Hanukkah scramble (tofu and veggies in a tangy, sesame sauce, served with crispy-delicious hamantaschen toast and apricot jam) is so filling and flavorful that it'll make even the most ardent meat-eater a little jealous. Mean while, the Indian Brunch (curried vegetable pancakes, spicy scrambled eggs and a creamy banana raita) is unexpected and hearty and there's a wide selection of omelets, pancakes and free-range meats.

Just because they have a Spanish name and first appeared for sale just over a hundred years ago along the Texas-Mexico border doesn't mean that burritos must be stuffed with standard Mexican — or even Southwestern — components. At least not in this brave new multicultural world, where chefs already into other forms of fusion — Zen ravioli, say, or bulgogi hip-hop — then step it up with crossover burritos creatively designed by. Best Burritos owner Wan Soo A certified chef in her native Korea she bought an existing burrito shop soon after emigrating to the United States and immediately began to experiment with its menu. The result is a culture-crunching repertoire that includes typical Mexican fare as well as lightly sauteed marinated tofu burritos juicy, three-mushroom burritos (which include shiitakes, of course), and piquant teriyaki/*bulgogi* burritos, whose tender marinated beef exudes alternating bursts of garlicky savory and sweet. Packed into large tortillas along with these fusion fillings — which are sautéed to order — are gigantic helpings of rice, boiled beans, chunky house-made salsa, and julienned lettuce and onion. *Bulgogi* and salsa sure. Wrap your head around that.

BEST PLACE TO COOK YOUR OWN KOREAN

Koryo Ja Jang

4390 Telegraph Ave. Ste. B, Oakland. 510-652-3900

There is plenty of great Korean food at this hidden treasure. Six noodle dishes, giant *jeon jeong* soup, fried dumplings and more. But the special thing about Koryo that not many restaurant-goers know about is the personal grill that comes with the traditional *gogi gui*. For the barbecue, lower an all of the you'll get a Bentiana type hot plate with a metal grill above it. The dish is strips of raw beef, pork, and chicken that you can drape over the grill and wait for the satisfaction of the perfection on your cooking. An order of *gogi gui* comes with an assortment of dipping sauces and a plate of lettuce used to make your meat into finger-licking wraps. Order the green-onion salad, called *Pajori*, to accompany your dish and add flavor and color. A meal comes out to about $7 a person — not bad for a very filling dinner or lunch. Plus, you end up feeling like you've actually done something productive.

BEST SALAD

Kansai's Spicy Ahi Tuna Poki Seaweed Salad

4395 Telegraph Ave., Oakland. 510-594-7273

Electric crunch. Fiery finish. This describes the out-of-this-world ahi tuna *poki* salad at Kansai (hip friendly open late (and even on New Year's Day) Temescal sushi house where they're always serving up something good. Value is a big commodity here, so most will get off pretty light on the pocketbook. But hark to the awesome *poki* seaweed salad. Some seaweed *poki* fans might be tempted to order this tasty treat as an appetizer perhaps to share with a mate, but don't. No order one all for yourself at this Korean-owned lounge-like emporium of sushi, sashimi and sake. Be ready to use your chopsticks as weapons if necessary. This salad marries a fresh brilliant green heft of seaweed with chunks of flavorful tuna and adds a spicy bite. It's as fresh as the sea as piquant as a just picked pepper. The seaweed is crisp and firm in just right contrast to the soft redolent tuna. Sesame seeds add another element to complete the experience.

BEST EASY FOOD YOU'LL WANT TO EAT VERY SLOWLY

Chick-O-Pea's

1305 Shattuck Ave. Berkeley, 510-540-8880. ChickOPeas.com

Fast food fanatics don't even want to pause long enough to get. Glistening up at a menu that they probably already know by heart they order, pay and then get handed their bags buckets, or boxes almost before they've had a chance to blink. Die-hards eat while they walk. Chick O-Pea's screws with their

Readers' Poll Winners

BEST AFRICAN RESTAURANT
Asmara

BEST BARBECUE
Everett & Jones

BEST BIKER BAR
Lanesplitter

BEST BREAKFAST/BRUNCH
Mama's Royal Cafe

BEST BREWERY
Pyramid

BEST CAFE/COFFEEHOUSE
Peet's

BEST CHINESE RESTAURANT
Little Shin Shin

BEST COCKTAILS
Flora

BEST DIVE BAR
The Alley

BEST GAY BAR
White Horse Inn

BEST INDIAN/PAKISTAN RESTAURANT
Vik's Chaat Corner

BEST ITALIAN RESTAURANT
Oliveto

BEST JAPANESE/SUSHI RESTAURANT
Kirala

BEST KARAOKE BAR
The Alley

BEST KOREAN RESTAURANT
Koryo

BEST MEXICAN RESTAURANT
Doña Tomas

BEST MIDDLE EASTERN RESTAURANT
La Mediterranée

BEST NEW RESTAURANT
Camino

BEST PIZZA
Zachary's

BEST SALADS
Whole Foods

BEST SANDWICHES
Bakesale Betty

BEST PICK UP BAR
Luka's Taproom & Lounge

BEST SEAFOOD
Sea Salt

BEST SOUTHERN/SOUL FOOD
Brown Sugar Kitchen

BEST STEAKS
Café Rouge

BEST THAI RESTAURANT
LAmyx

BEST THAI/BURMESE
Burma Superstar

BEST TIKI BAR
Forbidden Island

BEST VEGAN/VEGETARIAN
Café Gratitude

BEST VIETNAMESE/CAMBODIAN
Le Cheval

CHEAPEST DRINKS
Stork Club

Readers Say the Darndest Things

BEST AFRICAN RESTAURANT
Asmara
Watch out for the honey wine. It sneaks up on you. — *Kylie Gebbord*

BEST BARBECUE
Everett & Jones
Their Obama inauguration block party was enough to warrant an award. That was a truly fiery experience. — *Paul Williams*

KC BBQ in San Pablo
Everett and Jones is good, but don't sleep on KC BBQ with their housemade hotlinks and some of the best beef BBQ in town. — *Maurice Lydas*

Uncle W Lins
All of the ones you listed are REALLY BAD. — *Mario*

BEST BIKER BAR
Godspeed
But don't tell anyone. — *Azneen*

Lanesplitter
Um CHESE are are biker bars? He. — *Erica*

BEST BREAKFAST/BRUNCH
La Note
Le Pain Perdu — it made me cry tears of happiness. — *Lena*

Rudy's Can't Fail Cafe
Even with all of their vegetarian substitutions, it's still gloriously unhealthy. — *Ann Marie Faust*

The Old Place Seafood House
Their dim sum on Sundays is to swing die for. — *Mai Nguyen*

BEST BURGOKI BURRITOS
Best Burritos
1080 San Pablo Ave., El Cerrito 510-525-8358. Best-Burritos.com

BEST HAPPY HOUR IN THE EAST BAY!



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Readers Say the Darndest Things

BEST BREWERY

Buffalo Bill's — Hayward

They were the first in the area and they have never lost their touch for maintaining a tradition of excellence and a flair for innovation. — *Marvin Ochoa*

Pyramid

The free movies — *Aaron French*

Triple Rock

Monkey Headl — *Ann Marie Faust*

BEST CAFE/COFFEEHOUSE

Awaken Cafe

Love the live updates on the flart schedule! And that they have rice milk! — Rachel

Coke Coffee

NOT Cafe — *Willis Stork*

Day of the Dead Cafe

Skeletons and tea! — *Conan Neutron*

Peets

Coffee defined — *Abdu Bimani*

BEST CHINESE RESTAURANT

Shen Hua

It's a little pricey for Chinese food but tasty. Try the potstickers and you will sing "Love Lockdown" by Kanye West in Mandarin. — *Maurice Lyles*

routine, its specialty is falafel, which travel guidebooks used to call Israeli hot dogs fast food. But here the crunchy spicy chickpea patties come stuffed into chewy-fluffy house-baked bread, topped with as much as thirteen different Lebanese-style salads as you can pile on from the falafel bar, plus lashings of tahini, and, for those who enjoy igniting their tongues, *harissa*. You couldn't eat one of these fat overflowing treasure troves while walking, even if you wanted to. So pick a little table in the sun. All vegetarian and mostly vegan — owner Kamran Nassiri became a vegetarian ten years ago — Chick-O-Pea's also serves soup, salads, appetizers, meatless burgers, and crisp slender french fries with creative flavorings ranging from pesto to saffron to jerk. Bright flavors and compelling textures await with every bite; the falafel her which doubles as a salad bar includes black-eyed pea relish, dilled cucumber, herbed cauliflower, hummus, passata, tomato salsa, peppery crinkle-cut carrots, sweet roasted beets, pickled red onions, pickled celeriac, *tarator* tahini sauce, a Levantine coleslaw and *zhoug*, Yemen's cumin-spiked answer to green salsa.

BEST NEW FAST FOOD PLACE

Amanda's

2122 Shattuck Ave., Berkeley, 510-548-2122, Amandas.com

Businesses on Shattuck have been opening and closing their doors quite quickly in recent years, but hopefully this new veggie-friendly fast food joint is here to stay. Open only since last summer, Amanda's typically attracts a good-sized, steady crowd throughout the day, with a menu of indulgent yet not-horrible-for-you versions of fast food treats, naturally raised beef and chicken burgers, homemade vegetable patties, and baked sweet potato fries. As part of Eat Well, a program of the Berkeley Health and Human Services Department, Amanda's avoids using artificial ingredients, trans fat, and corn syrup, and flavors their house made sodas and chocolate milks with agave and stevia. Besides being nutritious, the food is palatable (and not just by health food standards) and completely reasonable for those on a college student budget. $3.75 gets you a juicy, grass-fed beef or lemongrass veggie burger. Not quite the McDonald's dollar menu, but Amanda's makes good fresh fast food available to people who can't stomach yuppified prices.

BEST POTPIES

Pot Pie Paradise

3622 Arden Rd., Hayward, 510-781-4906, PotPieParadise.com

In a strange dream one night Indonesian-born Theresia Gunawan saw herself selling potpies. She woke up convinced that it would sure what potpies even were. But Gunawan, a former chief cook at Mills College, believed in the power of dreams and was game to learn more. Three years later she presides over Pot Pie Paradise, selling her golden treats stuffed with a world spanning retinue of meat, vegetarian and vegan fillings at the Temescal and Castro Valley farmers markets as well as at her own Hayward shop. Raised outside the West thus not restrictively loyal to classic chicken potpie — although she does make those too — Gunawan offers more than two dozen varieties, ranging from fricassee pie to tikka masala pie to tempeh pie to gumbo pie to goulash pie to Creole gumbo pie to Thai curry pie to chicken-couscous pie (with rice-shaped orzo pasta) to Osaka beef pie (with soy sauce and sake) to beef and egg noodles pie to lime lamb pie. Dessert pies include a rum-spiked pina colada pie that was featured in last August's issue of *Every Day with Rachael Ray*. What is it about potpies and other stuffed baked things that makes us feel so snuggly and satisfied? Maybe it's their self-contained neatness. Maybe it's their circularity. Maybe it's that they're the culinary version of wrapped gifts.

SUBCULTURES
BEST OF THE EAST BAY 2009



Best Bloody Mary: At Henry's in Berkeley. Chris Duffey

BEST MUD PIE

Caffe Venezia

1799 University Ave., Berkeley, 510-849-4581
CaffeVenezia.com

Despite its origins in North Beach, it's half a century ago, mud pie is getting awfully hard to find in the greater Bay Area, which is a pity because mud pie is the most satisfying dessert ever conceived by humankind. This lusty slab of heaven combines three items that are already delightful on their own merits — mocha ice cream, chocolate cookies, and fudge — into one almost unspeakably rapturous confluence. Caffe Venezia, a family friendly bastion of fresh, inventive Northern Italian cookery, prepares an excellent mud pie with delectable Old World overtones. Their *tarta gelato* piles an *Nordenza* of high octane espresso ice cream on a luscious crust of crushed chocolate cookies bound with rich, dense cream cheese. The pie's crowning glory is the thick, dark chocolate rich fudge that runs down its sides and mingles with all that melting ice cream. A big handful of toasted almonds and a good half gallon of cloudlike whipped cream crowns this dreamy, endangered dessert.

BEST PANNA COTTA

Bellanico

4238 Park Blvd., Oakland, 510-336-1146
Bellanico.net

Panna cotta is one of the simplest and most transcendent of desserts. Although its name means "cooked cream" in Italian, this rich feathery union of sugar, vanilla, gelatin and (lots of) cream is barely simmered, and only for a couple of minutes. Its flavor is purely wonderfully lactic — the dessert originated in the dairylands of the Piedmont — and when properly prepared, its texture is smooth as satin. At Bellanico, a happy, Glenview neighborhood hangout with a penchant for inventive culinary concepts, the kitchen prepares a savory appetizer *panna cotta* that's as salty as the finest we've ever experienced, but it also boasts the jazzy presence of sweet blue-veined Gorgonzola, giving the dish a creamy intensity that raises it to the ethereal. It's served with half a dozen spears of chilled al dente asparagus, a green and crunchy accent to the lush *panna*, plus crispy toasted almonds and a potent drizzle of Cavedoni's sweet and peachy, five-year-old Il Caratello balsamico. Yum!

BEST ICE CREAM FLAVORS

Tara's Organic Ice Cream

3123 College Ave., Berkeley, 510-655-9014,
TarasOrganic.com

You may need a translator to fully appreci





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ato Tara s unforgettable flavors, from Adzuki Black Sesame to Yerba Santa. This New Medias transplant brought her eco-friendly business to Oakland in 2008 and boy are we glad to have her. Stepping into Tara s you ll often find the owner behind the counter wearing a sunny smile and a bright bandana to match. These ice creams sing with the essence of everything from Bay Laurel (a must-try) to Pink Peppercorn. Don t be surprised to find yourself slack-jawed in front of the case, trying one spoonful after another. Even in the ice-cream saturated market that is the East Bay, Tara s takes it to a whole new level. Their flavors pack a punch, but the impact on the environment is minimal. Tara s uses compostable cups made from sugarcane, spoons made from potato starch and all recycled paper products. Handmade cones including the don t miss version with sesame seeds folded into the batter also shine. Available flavors — all seasonal — are posted daily on Facebook, if you want to know what you ll find before stepping into this ice-cream wonderland. Not a bad idea since you might need to consult a reference book to determine what your options really are.

BEST HORSE MADE SODA

Saul's Restaurant and Delicatessen

1475 Shattuck Ave., Berkeley. 510-848-3354. SaulsDeli.com

Although some customers like to kvetch about the modest size of their pastrami sandwiches all quibbles are forgiven with a first sip of Saul s homemade soda. The deli mixes the extracts in house and sweetens each flavor with cane sugar instead of corn syrup. Blueberry soda, a vile proposition when made with artificial ingredients is transformed into something — dare we say it — sophisticated at Saul s. Blush-colored subtly sweet and laced with actual chunks of fresh fruit. Likewise their cream soda incorporates real vanilla for a delicate result that s vastly preferable to the usual cloying sweetness of commercial recipes. The lineup changes with the seasons...so keep a lookout for Meyer lemon blood orange, and strawberry and don t be afraid to venture into unknown territory. Celery soda may sound scary if you re not already a Cel-Ray fanatic, but it s shockingly good, and the cardamom flavor is so more exotic than root beer or ginger ale (Saul s makes that too) with a spicy mug that you won t taste in supermarket brands. For that final soda fountain flourish, retro cardboard straws add a certain soggy charm. Watch your back, Dr. Brown.

BEST BAR TO TAKE THE KIDS TO

Jupiter

2181 Shattuck Ave., Berkeley. 510-843-8277 JupiterBeer.com

Every college town has that comfortably beat-up-ass pizza-and-beer joint where friendly students serve pub food and a rotating menu of good handcrafted beers. Jupiter is one of those, and you can also add it to the long, long list of "only in Berkeley" phenomena for its world-class distinction of having creating a loophole of child tolerance. Most nights the live music (mostly jazz, of all persuasions) is geared toward nonbreeders who don't turn into pumpkins at 8 p.m. S-inday evenings though, Jupiter is the kid friendliest watering hole this side of Willie Wonka s Chocolate River. Don't get the wrong impression, they don't offer crayons or dinosaur-shaped chicken nuggets, and you might have to pat down your delicious Red Spot Ale to go shoo the kiddies away from the fire-spewing fountain. But patient servers dodge toddlers with acrobatic precision and the weekly Americana Unplugged series features free, foot-stomping bluegrass at 5 p.m., early enough to get everyone fed, partied out, and home to bed on time. Tables fill up fast...so get there early.



BEST SMOKIN' FRIENDLY BAR

George Kaye's

4044 Broadway, Oakland. 510-547-9374

Enter dutch doors to this tiny, dimly lit dive, which some regulars affectionately call "Geo Kaye's" (since the "rge" was dropped from the neon sign who knows when). Although it s not as heavy on the carcinogens as it was before the more restrictive smoking law for independently owned bars went into effect, don't expect to leave Kaye s clear-lunged. The barkeeps will not mind your lighting up. There s cheap beer (as cheap as $2.50 for a glass of Pabst from the tap) served in tumblers and a decent jukebox of punk, old country, and local jams to go with your American Spirit Blues. It s said to be a hipster bar and on nuts hipster bar. In fact this spot is a favorite for tatted up Temescal mustache types and middle-aged Mr. Cleavers alike, and the air that hints at nicotine. The more righteous-living patrons aren't the only ones sucking in second-hand smoke — there s rarely a night at Kaye s without a dog (or two) in evidence. Smoking and dogs with not a cranium in sight — you don't get much of that in San Francisco.

BEST PLACE TO CONTEMPLATE UNEMPLOYMENT AND A GRIM FUTURE

Kerry House

4092 Piedmont Ave., Oakland. 510-652-4032

The Kerry House — affectionately known as the Scary House — is one of the few dives left on Piedmont Avenue. Thin but smoky, dim, and claustrophobic, with many years worth of bruce lee and newspaper articles on the walls. A murder of old crows and wise men perch at the bar, determined not to give up their barstools to any young ruffians who wander in. And like the beer-polished bar, one veteran bartender is long, tall, and thin, and he sports both a waistcoat and laconic attitude. Surely, used red pool tables lurk at the rear, which is where the youthful punks and hipsters congregate. Few dare go up upstairs. The upper drinking rooms have a dark presence, and even though they're well lit, nervous Blair-Witch-Project like thoughts flit through the mind. Flee downstairs, drink several beers or something stronger, and then nip into the Kerry House Raj Indian Cuisine restaurant in the next storefront through the swinging doors. One does not even have to stumble out into the street to get there. 'Tis a British expat s idea of heaven: a pub and curry house right door to each other.

Readers Say the Darndest Things

BEST COCKTAILS

Doña Tomas

Their margaritas are like alchemy in a glass. — *Chelsea Moorhead*

Flora

Only place outside New Orleans I've had a good Sazerac cocktail — *Frederic Leur*

BEST DELI

Geneva Deli

Who doesn't love Demitne? — *Aron gendorf Giffis*

Saul's

Because it is. — *Hilly Le Du*

BEST DESSERTS

Bakesale Betty

Legendary for a reason! — *Dele*

Masse's Pastries

They made our wedding cake. It was KILLER. Only wedding cake I actually wanted MORE of — *Pegi Chase*

BEST DIVE BAR

Holey Toley

Mid-century porn — *Needles Serafimaths*

Mello-Dee

Evokes the best in darkened lounge style places to drown your sorrows, or find new ones. — *Peter Buffen*

Missouri Lounge

Although it's dumbed a couple rungs above dive lately. The chill atmosphere and hevy. of hoodie-clad guzzlers have remained in that home away from home. — *Maggie*

BEST PUNK BAR

Acme Bar

2115 San Pablo Ave Berkeley 510-644-2228

Berkeley's Acme Bar doesn't immediately stand out as particularly new or novel. In fact, the bar resembles one of those hipper dive bars popular in San Francisco. But the allure of this unassuming lounge on San Pablo Avenue is in its staff and clientele — primarily hitter-spurting Gen Xers with a penchant for enticing punk rock out of the establishment's Internet jukebox with more speed than a tweaker at a Ramones concert. The mix of likeable characters — stiff and well prepared/proportioned drinks, and amiable and attentive bartenders (and proprietress) creates a comfort zone for striking up casual conversation. The extensive drink menu features many upper-shelf whiskies and tequilas for a dollar less than at most other bars. Later in the evening, DJs spin anything from punk to rockabilly to soul which, instead of being blaring and overbearing, actually adds something electric to the Acme's atmosphere. A word to the wise: Plan your evening accordingly *around* a visit to Acme bar — it's easy to lose an extra hour, if not an entire night luxuriating in its atmosphere of absolute leisure.

BEST DEALS ON BREAKFAST AT 3 A.M. WHILE PLAYING CARDS

The Oaks Corner

4096 San Pablo Ave Emeryville 510-652-2259 OaksCorner.com

Perhaps the East Bay's closest thing to an East Coast diner or greasy spoon is the Emeryville institution the Oaks Corner, which is attached to the Oaks Card Club. Named after the former Oakland Oaks minor-league Pacific Coast baseball team located on the actual site of the Oaks Park baseball stadium at the corner of San Pablo Avenue and Park Street, the Oaks has been serving players and diners for more than fifty years. It's a sports bar hofbrau, Asian restaurant *and* 24-hour diner all wrapped into one faux panelled, lucky-green-carpeted, Fifties-style people-watching paradise. The real deal special is for the hungry players and high rollers next door in the sunken, somewhat seedy card room. Players seated at the tables can receive a 25 percent discount while playing poker. High rollers (if you have to ask, you're not one) get a whopping 50 percent off any menu item while gambling. Your base bacon and eggs with a choice of hash browns, steamed rice or grits and toast goes for an already low $4.75. Nonplaying customers can signal one of the roving waitresses in green vests and ask for the late-night menu after midnight.

BEST BRUNCH

Bistro Liaison

1849 Shattuck Ave. Berkeley 510-849-2155 LiaisonBerkeley.com

This bistro at the top of the Gourmet Ghetto hosts great lunches and fancy dinners but their *specialité*, in our humble opinion, is the weekend brunch. Yes, you'll pay more than most other brunches (most dishes are $10-$24 depending on if you get a lunchy or a brunchy). And yes, you may need a translator to figure out what you're ordering. But the extensive menu at Liaison and the belly gratitude you feel at the end of the meal are almost priceless. Options include eggs, croques, salads, and even bonifabosse if you feel like the lunch part of brunch. One of the more intricate dishes is the Bistro Plat: scrambled eggs smoked bacon, chicken-apple sausage, French toast and *pommes Lyonnaises*. It's a mouthful in more ways than one.

BEST BLOODY MARY

Henry's

2600 Durant Ave (in the Hotel Durant) Berkeley 510-809-4132, HenrysBerkeley.com

A good Bloody Mary is a meal in itself, a bracing, vitamin rich eye-opener with all



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- Michael Bauer, SF Chronicle

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the added benefits of hard liquor. Properly prepared, it's a rich and delicious antidote to hunger and hangover alike. As its name indicates, Henry's Everything but the Kitchen Sink Bloody Mary is particularly nourishing. Finlandia vodka is infused with horseradish, spices, and a garden's worth of garlic, onion, pimento, and mushroom, muddled with lime and stirred into house-made tomato juice, then — this morning's touch — splashed with a dollop of Guinness. The result is a lush, spicy, positively stimulating libation: the stout adding a creamy texture that is sensed rather than tasted, like the chocolate in a good mole. A pickled green bean garnish contributes crunch and heft, but if you want something more substantial, this handsomely remodeled Old Blue hangout can set you up with lemongrass garlic fries, deviled duck eggs, and other nutritious edge-of-pub grub.

BEST CHICKEN AND WAFFLES

Brown Sugar Kitchen

2534 Mandela Pkwy., Oakland. 510-893-7685.
BrownSugarKitchen.com

Chicken and waffles is one of the great culinary combinations, a hearty breakfast-lunch (or anytime) treat that combines the savory crunch of fried chicken with the crispy sweetness of Belgian waffles. This soul-food standby doesn't always live up to its potential, though, and occasionally lapses into a ponderous platter of starch and grease. At Brown Sugar Kitchen, a chrome and leatherette temple to nouvelle soul cuisine in Oakland's industrial western reaches, such culinary lapses are out of the question. Here the waffles are feather-light, crisp with cornmeal and drizzled with melted butter laced with brown sugar, and the chicken — pan-fried with an herb-flecked buttermilk coating till hot and crunchy on the outside, moist and tender within — makes a wonderfully satisfying complement. It's served with a pitcher of warm apple-cider syrup, a sharp, sweet orchard blossom of an accent. The lime-maroon deco-modernist dinner also offers top shelf greet-the-morning staples like Blue Bottle Coffee and Blue Chair Fruit apple butter.

BEST BOUGHBUR HOLES

Zeppole at BarCeluna

2319 Santa Clara Ave., Alameda. 510-521-3862
BarCeluna Alameda.com

When it comes to whetting the appetite there's nothing like a medium lump of sugary dough fried in hot fat, a delicacy the Italians are especially adept at, viz. the *sfince* of Sicily, the *sfrappole* of Bologna, the *bomboloni* of Tuscany, and the *crostoli* of Venice. Neapolitan *zeppole* is particularly toothsome. This fluffy, creamy, robust confection is consumed in quantity all throughout the country most traditionally during La Festa di San Giuseppe on March 19. Happily the staff at BarCelona have seen to it that you don't have to wait until the Vernal Equinox (or travel all the way to the Amalfi Coast) to sample them. Thin *zeppole* are prepared to order, so they arrive at the table hot and crunchy on the outside, thick and creamy on the inside, and accompanied by a buttery apple-scented caramel sauce in case the fritters aren't rich enough for you. Coffee is a slughunk's classic companion, but a bottle of bubbly is worthy and festive alternative.

BEST CAFE TO LOITER AT ALL DAY LONG AND DO "WORK"

Mama Buzz Cafe

2318 Telegraph Ave., Oakland. 510-465-4073.
MamaBuzzCafe.com

Located in what some might get suspiciously defensive about labeling "the hip part of town," Mama Buzz is surrounded by businesses such as Rock Paper Scissors Collective, the Stork Club, and Fort Gallery, to name but a few. They call this area an "underground arts district," and Mama Buzz is in many ways the hub with everything you could want from day'n lollygagging good times: strong coffee, cheap eats, local art on the walls and, of course, beer on tap. Hang out on the back patio and work on that never-ending novella. Maybe take a few furtive glances at mysterious poetry girl/boy in the corner. Here the subcultures collide, plot plan and yes, prompt. Hipsters stunners, poets, punks, bikers, artists, raconteurs, and wingnuts of all stripes come here to break bread together and "get it done," as the kids say. The street-scored furnishings, cracked windows, and twisting vines — even the stinky counters and surly staff — add to the charm. The creative energy practically seeps out of the walls.

BEST LIA HOUSE

The French Bakery

71 Lafayette Cir., Lafayette. 925-283-2226

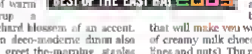
What makes a great tea house? Great tea, of course. But also, something extra. In the case of the French Bakery in Lafayette, that something extra is a killer selection of more than a dozen fresh baked pastries from a galette à l'orange to a financier to a hazelnut nougat that will make you weep (imagine a cylinder of creamy milk chocolate injected with pralines and nuts). The range of tea selections is likewise superb and staggering. A dozen of flavorful black teas and soothing herbal tisanes (notably, organic Rooibos, aged teas) to the $3 to $6 per pot range, premium Mariage Frères teas that range from $6 to $9 a pot, and the pricey Tea Forth fan $3 a cup. (Surprise: It's worth it.) Rounding out the experience is a picture-perfect decor (yes, it's girly with fine china, real tablecloths, and the usual accoutrements) and classic "high" teas from $12.50 to $27 per person that range from just scones to platters laden with scones, pastries, savories, tea sandwiches, and whatnot. The standard lunch menu is a solid selection of salads and tea house sandwiches (croque gourmand, turkey focaccia, etc.). Brace yourself for a dented wallet, this tea experience for two can easily run $60. But frankly, Scarlett, you won't regret it.

BEST CHOCOLATE CHIP COOKIE

Cioccolata Di Vino

1801 Shattuck Ave., Ste. C, Berkeley. 510-898-1302.
CioccolataDiVino.com





Readers Say the Darndest Things

BEST BAY BAR

Bench and Bar

Three stories of gay boys dancing!!!! — *Amanda Jones*

Velvet

Best lesbian bar — *Amy*

BEST IRANIAN/PAKISTANI RESTAURANT

Ajanta

Nicest people, best food. Fresh ingredients and really interesting dishes you don't find elsewhere. — *Anuradha Vikram*

Vik's Chaat Corner

It's always packed for a reason! — *Julia Nowak*

BEST JAPANESE/SUSHI RESTAURANT

Coach Sushi

If you order sake, they give you unlimited refills. Luckily, they within walking distance — *Njeri Eaton*

Kamakura

Fatih Yamamoto is the most generous restaurateur in the world! — *Claudia Perkins*

BEST KARAOKE BAR

The Alley

I wouldn't call it karaoke, though. — *Mark Shaw*

Keep your Oreos, snickerdoodles Viennese fingers, *pfefferniisse* shortbread, gingerbread, biscotti madeleines, Malomars and macaroons. When the milk is cold and the sweet tooth's a-hankering, all we really want is a platter of soft, fragrant chocolate chip cookies. Mrs. Fields and Famous Amos offer perfectly adequate Toll House knockoffs, but when you're craving an ultimate coalescence of butter, sugar and cocoa-bean essence, hie thee to Cioccolata Di Vino, a classy restaurant/bakery/wine bar in Berkeley's Gourmet Ghetto. Their house-made rookies are absolutely packed with top-shelf Callebaut Belgian chocolate and crunchy-creamy pecan shards, so packed in fact that the cookies end up like chunks of candy barely held together with a spoonful of buttery undercooked dough. These endorphin-rich treats complete for your attention with a fine selection of tarts, cakes, *gelati* and truffles (plus antipasti and *panini*) but you can't go wrong with chocolate chip cookies and a glass of milk (although that Comme del Mas Banyuls makes a mighty tasty lactose-free substitute).

BEST BAKLAVA

Turkish Kitchen

1508 Shattuck Ave Berkeley 510-540-9097
TurkishKitchen@berkeley.com

The ideal baklava should combine lush, crisp, sweet and earthy into one big, terrific package, on separation far beyond the ken of whoever's baking up all those pasty, underdry wannabes that are all too common these days. Turkish Kitchen's spectacular rendition is most almost creamy, with butter-soaked phyllo, thick chunks of roasted pistachio, and a plenitude of honey saturating every supple layer. Rich and moist, like a sun kissed Mediterranean bread pudding, with zest and crunch its gooey magnificence is best tackled with knife and fork. Turkish Kitchen is a cheerful bastion of yummy, affordable Old World cooking with eye-catching murals and that strong, fragrant coffee that goes so well with rich buttery-honey-drenched sweet stuff.

BEST LEBANESE/GREEK RESTAURANT (TIE)/BEST AFRICAN AMERICAN BAR THAT USED TO BE A BANK

Wally's Cafe

3900 San Pablo Ave Emeryville 510-597-1300

East Bay foodies and lovers of fresh and cheap Mediterranean meals will be hard-pressed to find a better hot spot than the one hidden behind the Emeryville juke joint the Bank Club. Wally's Cafe is named after proprietor Wally Mansur, who operates it with his wife, Angelica, and son Ronnie. Sizzling up specialty plates since late 2007, Wally's attracts Pixar employees at lunch and is home to an eclectic blend of locals: hairless and college kids by night. Enter via the Bank Club to downplay the sometimes-strange looks from locals, or head around back past the Dumpster and bougainvillea and use the side entrance to get to the restaurant's classic wraparound counter. Trays of photos of Lebanon's coast adorn the walls, in keeping with the restaurant's Lebanese take on Greek and Mediterranean food. The superb-size specialty plates, at $11.95, easily feed two to three hungry eaters and come with complimentary spicy lentil and rice soup. For lighter lunchers, grab a falafel, gyro wrap, or chicken or beef *shawarma* ($6.99) and let the flavor begin. Lebanese baklava (pistachios instead of walnuts) comes out crisply light, not too sticky and not too sweet. Mediterranean staples such as burgers, burritos, cheese steaks, and chicken wings are also all available. Cash only.

BEST PUPUSAS

Maiz Restaurante

2200 San Pablo Ave Berkeley 510-647-8079

Although *pupusas* have been delighting the residents of El Salvador for a few thousand years, these savory noshes only arrived in the Bay Area in the 1980s, when emigres from the country's civil war introduced *norteamericanos* to the pleasures of stuffed and grilled maize. At Maiz, a friendly little hole-away abundant with *folklorico* antennae, the house *pupusas* are lighter and crispier than the standard and thoroughly satisfying to boot. Crafted by hand of caramel

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